

SERMONS FOR THE
CHRISTIAN YEAR †

ADVENT TO FIFTH SUNDAY
AFTER EASTER † † † † † † †

Dr. A. G. Mortimer

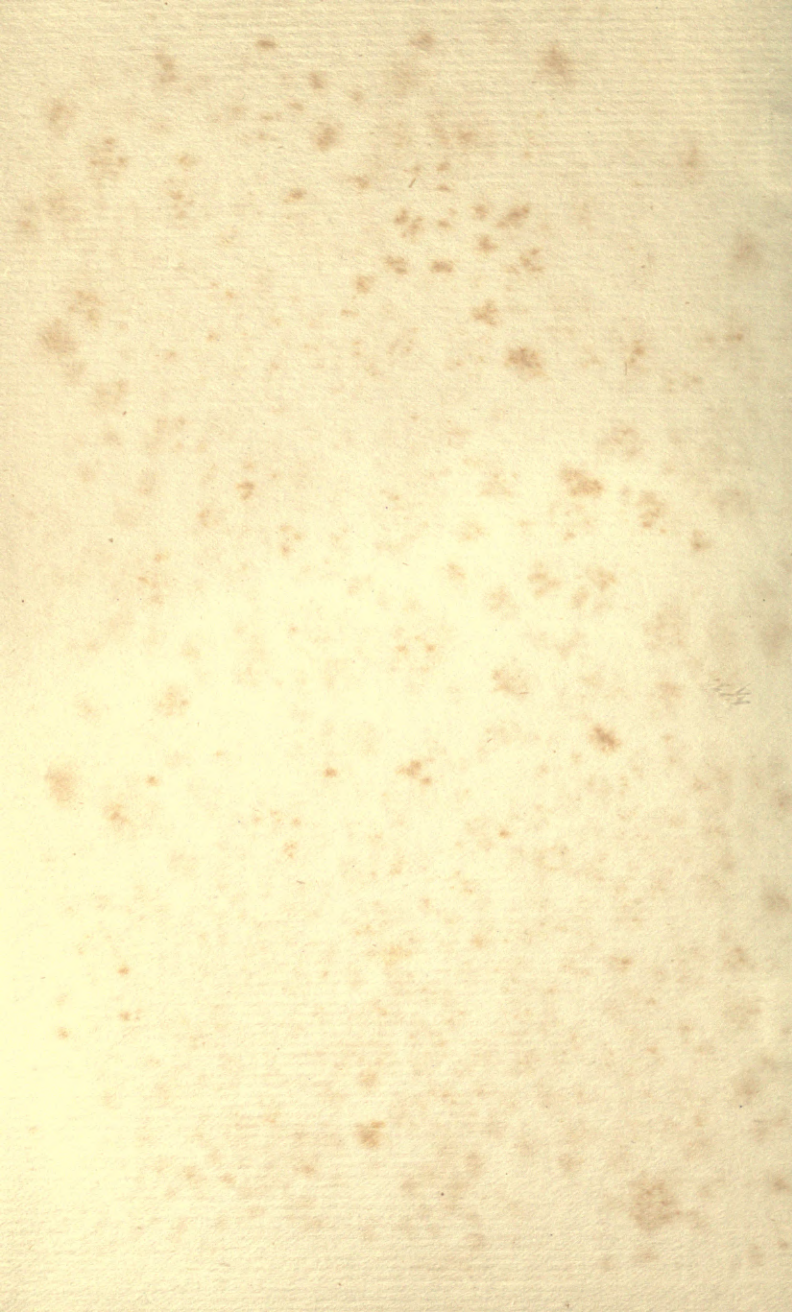
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THE CHURCH'S LESSONS FOR THE
CHRISTIAN YEAR.



The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year.

BEING
ONE HUNDRED AND TWENTY SERMONS.

VOL. I.
ADVENT TO THE FIFTH SUNDAY AFTER EASTER.

BY THE REV.

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RECTOR OF S. MARK'S, PHILADELPHIA.

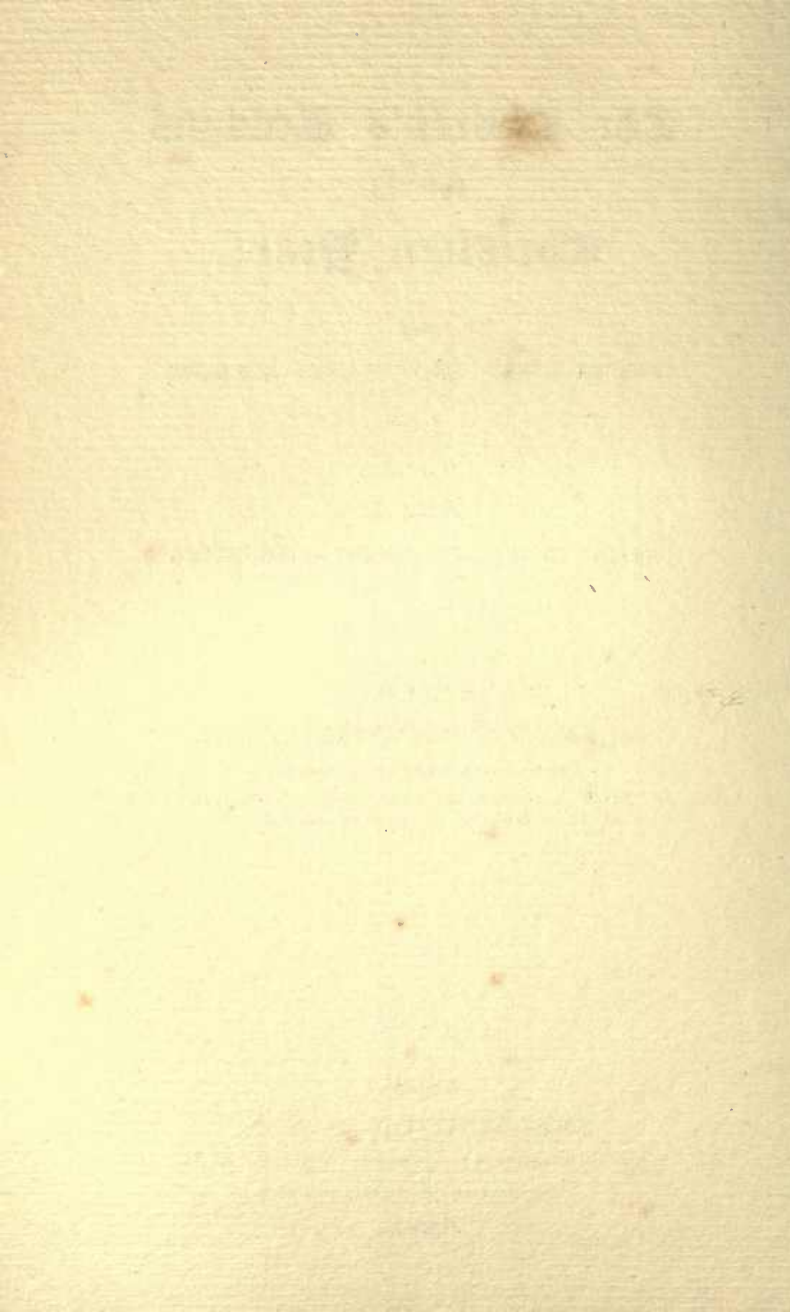
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SEVEN LAST WORDS," "LENTEN PREACHING," ETC.

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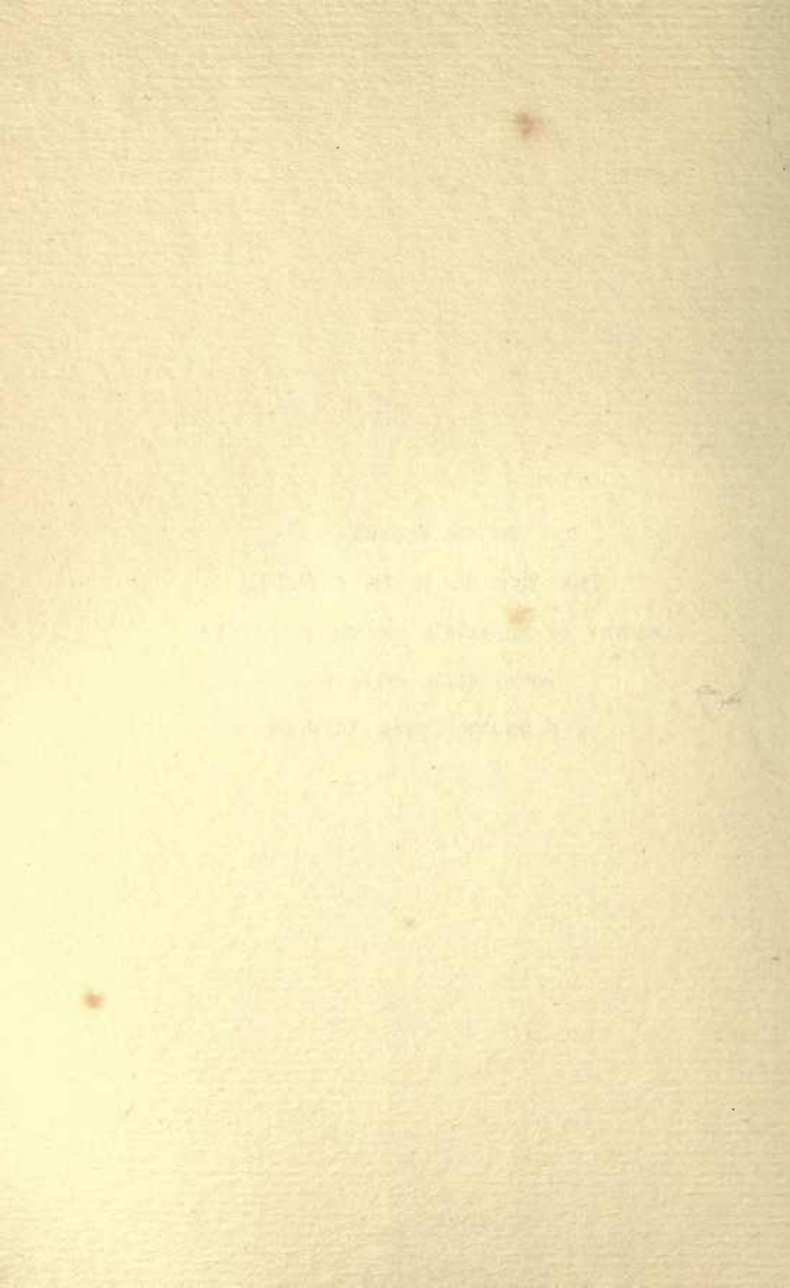
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TO MY BROTHER,
THE REV. F. E. MORTIMER,
RECTOR OF S. MARK'S, JERSEY CITY, U.S.A.,
WITH MUCH AFFECTION,
I DEDICATE THESE SERMONS.



Preface.

THE Sermons in these volumes were, for the most part, preached (in substance) in S. Mark's, Philadelphia, during the year 1903. Their title, "The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year," indicates their scope, for all are based upon some passage in the Morning Lessons for the Sundays and chief Holy-days of the Year.

Two Sermons are provided for each of these days, one from the Old Testament, the other from the New; the former is, in all cases, taken from the First Lesson at Matins. But, as the English Prayer Book does not appoint a *proper* Second Lesson, except for the principal feasts and fasts; and for ordinary Sundays follows the regular course of the daily Lessons from the New Testament, I have taken the subjects of the New Testament Sermons from the Lectionary of the American Prayer Book, in which the New Testament Lessons, as well as those from the Old Testament, are *fixed*, and are appropriate to the season. I have, however, not done this where a New Testament *proper* Lesson is appointed in the English Book; but have, in such cases, followed the English Lectionary.

My aim has been to make these Sermons a help to a better knowledge of the Bible. The passage chosen for the text is therefore always treated in its relation to its context. This has often involved, especially in the Old Testament Sermons, a brief exegetical introduction, in which I have generally endeavoured to recognize the results of the latest criticism of Biblical scholars, though not of higher critics. Care has also been taken, where needful, to point out the correct reading and accurate translation of the original text. The character of the Sermons and their brevity has, however, prevented any full discussion of such matters.

A. G. M.

*S. Mark's, Philadelphia,
Lent, 1904.*

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The Church's Lessons for the Christian Year.

Sermon I.

THE SUM TOTAL OF LIFE. ✓

(Advent Sunday.)

ISAIAH I. 16, 17.

"Cease to do evil; learn to do well."

✓.

THE Old Testament lessons during the season of Advent are taken from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah. This morning we have for our consideration the first chapter. There is a special fitness in the Church's choice of Isaiah for our study in Advent, since he is indeed the evangelical Prophet—not only prophesying of the coming of our Lord, but foretelling almost all the great events of His life.

For he prophesies of the Annunciation, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son";¹ of the Nativity, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given";² of the Epiphany, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee";³ of Passion-Tide,

¹ Isaiah vii. 14.

² Isaiah ix. 6.

³ Isaiah lx. 1.

“He is despised and rejected of men ; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief”;¹ of Easter and Ascension, “Who is this that cometh from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah ? this that is glorious in His apparel, travelling in the greatness of His strength ? I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save.”²

These are but isolated texts, but in the prophecy itself we can read the Incarnation, the Passion, in fact, the whole Gospel of Redemption.

The first chapter, from which our text is taken, contains God’s complaint, Israel’s excuse, and God’s counsel. In the first five verses we have God’s complaint of His people’s declension and rebellion. “Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth : for the Lord hath spoken, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against Me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master’s crib : but Israel doth not know, My people doth not consider.”³

Then God reveals the consequences of rebellion against Him. “Why should ye be stricken any more ? ye will revolt more and more : the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it ; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores. . . . Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire ; your land, strangers devour it in your presence.”⁴

After this God anticipates the excuse which Israel might make, that they fulfilled the obligations of the ceremonial law, that they offered sacrifices regularly, that they kept the feasts of their Church. While, however, rendering this outward service, their hearts were far from God, their lives belied their worship of Him. Their excuse God anticipates by showing how valueless in His sight is such service, for

¹ Isaiah liii. 3.

² Isaiah lxiii. 1.

³ Isaiah i. 2, 3.

⁴ Isaiah i. 5, 6, 7.

The Sum Total of Life. 50

He says, "To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto Me? . . . I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. . . . Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto Me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. . . . And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide Mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood."¹

Then follows God's counsel. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well."²

Thus we see how the whole chapter works up, as it were, to the passage we have taken for our text, "Cease to do evil; learn to do well." It is one of those brief sentences in which all our spiritual life is summed up. It consists of two short clauses, which bring before us the two sides of God's service, the negative and the positive sides; while their association in the same passage sets forth the importance of both, and the great danger which we run in separating one from the other.

I. And this is my subject to-day. Our life, so far as its spiritual side is concerned, falls into two great divisions. There must be the negative work of repentance: the giving up of habits of sin, the resisting of temptation, all of which falls under the clause "Cease to do evil." And this is, of course, of the greatest importance, for without it we can make no progress whatever. The world has a proverb about turning over a new leaf, and at this Advent season this proverb is often suggested as a good New Year's resolution, "I will turn over a new leaf and begin to do better." Satan is very willing that we should try this, that we should

¹Isaiah i. 11-15.

²Isaiah i. 16, 17.

do this—on one condition, that we do not blot out the sins which are recorded on the old leaves.

And here is the fallacy of the proverb; for if we begin to do well without first, so far as we can, undoing the evil we have done, we are like the man who built his house upon the sand.¹ The house may be fair to behold, and very comfortable to live in, but sooner or later the storm of temptation will come and burst over that house, and if the foundation be not good, if it be not founded upon a real repentance, great will be the fall of that house.

In building a house, the most important thing is a good foundation. If there be a flaw there, the house will never be safe. Some few years ago one of the towers of a great cathedral began to settle and to show signs of falling. On examining the foundation it was discovered that it rested upon a stone coffin which had collapsed and thus caused the settlement of the tower.

How many a spiritual life which has been begun by the successful turning over of a new leaf, has gone on with apparent prosperity for years, and suddenly has collapsed; and if the cause is investigated, it will be found to be a flaw in that man's repentance, the dead bones of mortal sins which had never been dug out of the foundations by honest penitence.

We must therefore realize that the first clause of our text requires, not merely that we should cease to do evil, but that we should repent of the evil which we have done. That it does require this, is evident from the first half of the verse, "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil"; and from the next paragraph, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as

¹ Cf. S. Matt. vii. 26.

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scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." ¹

There is only one Fountain in which we can wash and be clean, the precious Blood of Jesus Christ. There is only One Who can blot out our sins, He Who blotted out the handwriting that was against us, nailing it to His Cross.² Turning over a new page will not blot out what is on the old pages. Time will not blot them out. Time can do wonders ; it can heal many wounds, can blot out from our memories many things which we thought we never could forget. But there is one thing that time cannot do, that eternity cannot do. It cannot blot out one mortal sin from the book of judgment, from the memory of God. But what time cannot do, penitence and the precious Blood of Jesus Christ can accomplish in a moment. " Wash you, make you clean ; . . . though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

Let us, then, first learn thoroughly this Advent lesson in preparation for the coming of our Lord, that in ceasing to do evil we must blot out also the evil that we have done.

II. But there is the second clause of my text to be considered—"learn to do well"—and it is almost as important as the first—"cease to do evil." For though we can make no real progress without penitence, without breaking off from sin, penitence alone is only the negative side of our life, and God did not create us only that we might not sin.

How sad it is to hear those who are approaching their end say, as they review their life, " Well, I have never done any harm to anyone. I have never committed any great sins. I am not afraid to die." How sad to hear these words, as one often does, from the lips of those who have

¹ Isaiah i. 16-18.

² Cf. Col. ii. 14.

never recognized their obligation to live for God, to work for Him, to glorify Him !

My brother, GOD did not create you and endow you with all those glorious gifts of mind and soul and body, which you possess, merely that you might do no evil. He created you that you might do good, that you might be of some use in this world, that you might work for your fellow-man and for the Church of Christ.

In the parable of the labourers our Lord said, "Go, *work* in My vineyard." And it was those who had *worked* for various periods who came at the last to receive their reward. And again, we are told in the Book of Revelation, of the dead, that "they were judged every man according to their works."¹ In the parable of the unprofitable servant the Lord said, "Cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." "Unprofitable" in the Greek (*ἀχρεῖον*) is simply "useless." But what harm or evil had this useless servant done that he should be cast into outer darkness? None that we know of. Indeed, he seems to have been exactly the person who could say, and did say, that he had done no harm. He had taken great care of his talent, had hidden it in the earth, and with a certain amount of triumph showed it to his Lord, saying, "I was afraid, and went and hid Thy talent in the earth: lo, there Thou hast that is Thine."² He was afraid to do harm, to do evil, so he did nothing, and he was cast into outer darkness because he was useless.

God did not create you and give you all the great talents you possess, that you might do no harm, but that you might be of some use in the world. No one ever made any instrument merely that it might do no harm, but that it might accomplish the purpose for which it was made; and if it

¹ Rev. xx. 13.

² S. Matt. xxv. 25.

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is useless, it is generally destroyed because it is useless.

Again, in the same chapter of S. Matthew, in the parable of the sheep and the goats, those that were on the left hand were lost, not because they had done anything wrong, but because they had left undone works of mercy, because they had neglected to use their opportunity of ministering to the least of Christ's brethren. Indeed, in all our Lord's parables of judgment there is not one which speaks of a soul being lost by positive sin. The cause of its loss is always the neglect of opportunity to work. The unjust steward wasted his master's goods. The rich man in torments neglected to minister to Lazarus. The man with the one pound wrapped it in a napkin. The foolish virgins omitted to supply oil for their lamps.

What a solemn warning this is—that life does not consist merely in doing no harm, in ceasing to do evil. But that life consists also in doing good, in learning to do well! How much we have to learn! And learning implies labour, demands time, requires perseverance. How much we have to learn about God and His revelation to man, about the Kingdom of Heaven and our duties as its citizens?

Then, too, we have to form habits of virtue. And habits are only formed gradually, whether they be good habits or bad habits. Take one habit to think of to-day, the habit of prayer. Some people think it is an easy habit to acquire. They are those who have never tried it. What is prayer? It is the language in which the soul speaks to God. It takes time and labour to learn a new language. If we desire to learn French or German, we expect to devote a great deal of time to it; and unless we also work hard at it we are not likely to make much progress. Perhaps we say we will devote an hour a day to the study of some foreign tongue, and after doing this regularly and with real concen-

tration of mind and effort for two or three years, we begin to find that we know something about the language, that we have mastered its difficulties, that we can read it perhaps fairly well, although we can hardly speak it fluently.

My brethren, let me say to you very solemnly to-day, that if you want to learn the language of prayer, the language in which your soul speaks to God, you must give your heart to the work. If you were to devote an hour a day for two or three years, with real concentration of mind, to your prayer, how wonderful would be the result! You would acquire the habit of prayer. You would become a man of prayer. And prayer would transform your whole life; you would "cease to do evil"; you would "learn to do well."

Would not this be a good resolution with which to begin the new Christian Year? I will learn to pray well; I will learn the language of God; I will strive to acquire the habit of prayer. Then when our Lord came to you at the last, whether at the moment of your death, or at His glorious coming to judge the world, how happy would be your meeting with Him? How joyful would be His greeting, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you. Well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of thy Lord."

Sermon II.

THE ANGEL'S MESSAGE TO ZACHARIAS.

(Advent Sunday.)

S. LUKE I. 13.

"But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elizabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John."



T. LUKE is the evangelist of Advent, as S. John Baptist is its patron saint. S. Luke alone gives the interesting details of the events which preceded the birth of our Lord—the message to Zacharias, the Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin, her visit to S. Elizabeth, and the circumstances of the birth of S. John Baptist.

It has been pointed out by some of the best Scriptural scholars that the ultimate source from which S. Luke derived his information on these points was evidently the Blessed Virgin Mary herself. I say "the ultimate source," because it is possible that S. Luke may not have learned the facts directly from the Mother of our Lord, but possibly through some documentary channel, though *tradition* is against this.

It is, however, quite clear that the details of the Annunciation could have come only from the Blessed Virgin; and there are also particulars in the story of the visitation of S. Elizabeth which point to a woman as its author; while the relation in which our Lord's Mother stood to S. Elizabeth would explain the fulness of detail in regard to

☞ The Angel's Message to Zacharias.

the circumstances both of the conception and of the birth of S. John Baptist.

We may draw attention also to the fact that while the style of the first four verses of the chapter—the preface, as it were—is peculiar and in pure Greek, the remainder of the chapter is totally different, and is evidently a translation from a Hebrew document or oral narrative. It would seem as though S. Luke were unwilling to give in his own words the story which had come directly from the Blessed Virgin, but translated it from the Aramaic as literally as possible, even though it somewhat spoiled the style of his Greek. This is an additional evidence of the source from which S. Luke derived his knowledge of the events which preceded the birth of Christ.

In a similar way it has been recognized that the scanty details of Mary's espousals, and of the conception and birth of Jesus Christ, given by S. Matthew, could only have come from S. Joseph.

We observe, therefore, that of the two evangelists who record the events connected with our Lord's birth, S. Matthew's account is certainly derived from information imparted by S. Joseph, and S. Luke's from details originally known only to the Blessed Virgin. It would, therefore, be quite impossible to have better authority for these facts than the two principal actors in them.

The events which immediately preceded our Lord's birth are certainly appropriate subjects for our consideration in Advent, since Advent is especially a preparation for keeping the Festival of Christ's birth at Christmas.

I. Let us, then, to-day begin with the message of the angel to Zacharias. S. Luke has the special gift of word-painting. Again and again we find that by a few strokes of his pen—a felicitous expression or a happy clause—he

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brings before us vividly the scene or history he is describing. And this is the case in the two verses in which he paints the life-history of Zacharias and Elizabeth. After having given their family, he adds that "they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless."

Here is summed up in a verse their life towards God and towards man; towards God they were righteous, fulfilling carefully His commandments and ordinances; towards their neighbour they were blameless. God, Who alone could read their hearts, testifies, through His inspired evangelist, to their inner life; while their outer life commanded the respect and esteem of those among whom they dwelt. Nothing more can be wanted than God's favour and man's respect.

The occupation of Zacharias was the highest to which any man could be called, the direct service of God in the priesthood; and further, the coupling of the name of his wife Elizabeth with his in the words of praise we have considered, shows us that their conjugal life was very perfect, not only that they lived together in love and mutual respect, but that they had, besides the marital bond, that which is the greatest of all bonds of human life, —a common aim, a common sympathy in the love and service of God.

But in the next verse S. Luke paints in the dark background—the sorrow, which was at once the great disappointment, and, in the way in which it was borne, the great sanctification of their life. "They had no child . . . and they both were now well stricken in years."

A childless house is always a sad house, but how much more so among the Jews, where to be without a child was looked upon as a reproach and mark of divine displeasure. It is evident, however, that it was borne patiently and

❧ The Angel's Message to Zacharias.

lovingly by this aged couple. That they did not murmur at their lot seems to be indicated in the assurance that they were both righteous before God and blameless.

Zacharias was engaged in the work of his ministry, for he was appointed by lot that day to offer incense ; and it was in the exercise of the highest functions of his priesthood that God's revelation was vouchsafed to him.

How often it is so, that in doing our work, in the fulfilment of recognized duty, we find God's revelation !

The angel Gabriel appears to him and announces that his prayer is heard, and that his wife Elizabeth shall bear a son. Probably for many years the one special prayer of Zacharias and his wife had been that they might have a child. They were well stricken in years, and apparently had given up hope ; but they still continued their prayer, and after long waiting, when the very prayer itself seemed hopeless, because they persevered they were rewarded.

That they had given up hope, seemed also to be implied in Zacharias' question, " Whereby shall I know this ? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years." The question revealed a want of faith, which met with prompt punishment ; for the sign by which he was to know the truth of the promise was in itself a penance. He was to be dumb and not able to speak until the day the promise was fulfilled.

In the one failure in Zacharias' life we have the very contrast to Abraham, who, when under similar circumstances he was promised a son, " being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb : he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief ; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God ; and

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being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform."¹

II. But not only is Zacharias promised a child, but the angel reveals to him the future of that child. He was born of pious parents, he was a child of many prayers, and his life was to be a blessing both to his parents and to his nation, and indeed to Christians as well.

The most important privilege foretold by the angel was that he should be "great in the sight of the Lord." Many are great in their own eyes, some in the eyes of their friends, few in the eyes of the world, fewer still in the eyes of God. S. John was to be one of this highest class. Greatness in the eyes of God implies intrinsic merit ; for God judges not as men judge, by extraneous circumstances of wealth or power ; or by reputation, which is based rather upon what a man appears to be than what he really is. God reads the heart, knows the whole man ; and to be great in the sight of God is to be great indeed !

And then he was not only to be great *in the sight* of God, but God was to dwell in him ; for the angel said, "He shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb." God's delight is to dwell with the sons of men, yea, to dwell in them through the operation of the Holy Ghost ; and those who yield themselves to the loving inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will become great in the sight of God.

But again, he was to be master of himself ; for he was to be *temperate* ; and no man can be master of himself who is intemperate, whether in eating or drinking, or the indulgence of any other appetite or passion. This temperance was to go so far as abstaining even from things lawful ; for the angel said, he "shall drink neither wine nor strong drink."

Then he was to be a joy to his parents. How great and

¹ Rom. iv. 19-21.

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natural is parental ambition ! and yet, how often misdirected. If a father were asked what was his ambition for his son, how few would reply, "That he may be great in the sight of God ; that he may be a good man." Many would answer, "That he may be great in the sight of men, a success in the world, a power in his city or country." And yet, neither success nor power brings happiness, either here or hereafter. But to be a good man, to be great in the sight of God, insures peace and happiness in this life, and glory in the life to come.

S. John was to be a joy to his parents, first, in being great in the sight of the Lord, in being a good man ; and then in influencing others for good ; in being not only a power, but a power for good in his generation.

And yet again, Gabriel foretold that he should be a joy to others besides his parents ; for, he says, "Many shall rejoice at his birth," "And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God."

Lastly, his greatness was to be of the heroic character exhibited by Elijah of old ; for the angel said that he should go before the Lord "in the spirit and power of Elias." The age in which S. John lived, like the age of Ahab before, needed a man of dauntless courage to rebuke kings ; for, as Elijah rebuked Ahab, so S. John rebuked Herod. S. John's life was holy, his words were fearless, and enforced by the power of his own example ; and though his condemnation of Herod's sin led only to his own martyrdom, yet in numbers of other cases his words brought forth fruit ; for the angel had foretold that he was "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just ; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

His life was to be a life of success in God's service. He

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was to be the instrument, under God, in winning souls to salvation, in making homes holier, in making men more honest, more upright, more just, both in their dealings with God and with their fellow-men. What could be a nobler life than this? What could fill a holy father's heart with greater joy than to promise that he should have such a son?

Parents should strive to live holy lives because they realize the responsibility of their own influence upon their children, and should make their children the special subject of their daily prayers; not that they may win this world's rewards, except so far as it be God's Will, but that they may grow up good, just, and true in the sight of God and of man—that they may be useful in their generation, and attain to the reward of those who have served God faithfully.

Sermon III.

THE VINEYARD OF THE SOUL.

(The Second Sunday in Advent.)

ISAIAH V. 1, 2.

✓
“Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill: And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.”

HE prophecies and visions of Isaiah have a two-fold reference—to events in the present or near future affecting the Jewish kingdom, and to events in the remote future affecting the Christian Church for all time. The passage which I have

chosen as my text is, however, neither a prophecy nor a vision, but a parable, and bears a striking resemblance to our Lord's parable of the Vineyard.¹

This parable is in the form of a psalm addressed by the prophet to Jehovah, and in the third verse Jehovah takes up the parable, and, as if it had been a fact, calls upon the men of Judah and Jerusalem to judge between Him and His vineyard, and then pronounces sentence upon it.

I. There can be no question that the immediate application of the parable is to the Jewish Church, for in the seventh verse we are told this. The Jewish Church then is represented under the image of a vineyard planted in a very fruitful hill; and from this we are taught that the unfruitfulness of the vineyard was not occasioned by the sterility of the soil, that the failure of the chosen people to respond to God's demands did not arise from any lack of power to do so, but from perversion of will. God chose them because He saw in them the possibilities of a great vocation, and He endowed them with all the gifts which they needed for its fulfilment. They were indeed the "very fruitful hill" of the parable.

Then he "fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof." The word translated "fenced" occurs only in this place, and its meaning is not quite clear. In the revised version it is rendered, "he made a trench about it." Either of these renderings would suggest something of the character of a protection, and this may be taken for the Law given from Sinai, fencing in Israel round about, and protecting the Jew from sinful intercourse with the surrounding nations. The gathering out of the stones, which, in a country like Palestine, was a primary necessity for the cultivation of the land, would represent the extirpation of the evil habits

¹ Cf. S. Matt. xxi. 33; S. Mark xii. 1; S. Luke xx. 9.

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which the Jews had learned from their masters in Egypt during the period of their bondage.

“And planted it with the choicest vine.” The great endowment of Israel was the knowledge of the true God by revelation. The heathen nations around believed in the existence of God, and worshipped many of the powers of nature as gods, but to Israel it was revealed that there was but one God—Jehovah, and in the revelation of that name was contained a knowledge of the character of God as the Self-existent, the Underived One.

“And built a tower in the midst of it.” It was customary to build a tower in vineyards, that from thence watch might be kept against marauders. The tower in Isaiah’s time might be taken to symbolize the Temple, of which God said—it is “the place that I have chosen to set My name there,”¹ the place where continual watch was kept, and sacrifices and intercessions offered for the whole of God’s people.

“And also made a winepress therein.” The winepress we may take of the altars of the Temple, whence the sacrifices which told of redemption were offered daily ; whence flowed the blood of victims, typifying the precious Blood of Christ, by which the world was redeemed.

“And He looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.” With all the care bestowed on it, with all the tillage it received, it brought forth the natural, not the cultivated fruit, and this was worthless. So with Israel. After all that God had done for His people they brought forth only the natural fruit of sin, like the nations around them. Notwithstanding their greater knowledge and privileges, they were little better than the people who, on account of their sins, had been driven out to make way for them.

¹ Neh. i. 9.

Here the psalm ends, and Jehovah takes up the parable. Appealing to the men of Judah and Jerusalem to judge between Him and His vineyard, He pronounces sentence in these words: "I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down; and I will lay it waste; it shall not be pruned nor digged, but there shall come up briars and thorns; I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it." This was partially fulfilled when Nebuchadnezzar carried the people into captivity and for some seventy years left the land desolate. But the more complete fulfilment of this sentence is to be seen in the downfall of the Jewish people as a nation after the destruction of Jerusalem under Titus, when they were dispersed throughout the world and their country left desolate.

II. For us this passage is a parable of the Christian Church and of our own souls. The Christian Church is Christ's vineyard. He says Himself: "I am the Vine; ye are the branches."¹ It is planted in a very fruitful hill—the Hill of Calvary, watered by the precious Blood flowing from His wounded side; fenced around by the holy angels; the stones of evil cast out of it by the very law of holiness which its name, "the *Holy* Catholic Church," implies.

It is planted with the choicest Vine of Christ's own nature, for the Church is His Body; the tower, that Bible which not only warns us against the assaults of our enemies, but provides us with the very armoury of weapons with which to meet all their temptations; the winepress, the Altars of the Eucharist, whence flows the Blood of Christ, the Wine of Heaven; and the grapes—choice, cultivated grapes, the Saints of God, the fruits of the Passion, the work of the Holy Ghost.

¹ S. John xv. 5.

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And upon the Christian Church, when it is unfaithful to its high calling, falls the punishment of desolation and darkness, such as we have seen again and again in times of corruption of morals, or of decay of faith ; such visitations of punishment as the Church experienced in the 15th and 18th centuries.

III. While it is interesting to trace the historical fulfilment of Isaiah's parable in the Jewish nation and in the Christian Church, it will be of more practical value to us to apply it to the experiences and dangers of our own soul's life ; for the individual soul is a miniature of the Church, and we are generally able to apply to it the teachings and warnings which primarily refer to the whole Body of Christ.

Our own individual soul is indeed Christ's vineyard, rendered fruitful by the streams of grace with which He has so plentifully supplied us, and which water the vineyard of our soul as the four rivers watered the Garden of Eden.

Our soul, too, is fenced around with the bulwarks of grace, that "first" robe given us in baptism, which, like the walls of a strong city, renders us impregnable to the attacks of our spiritual foe. It matters not how fierce is the assault, no breach can be made in those walls of grace except with the consent and aid of some traitor within ! The battering rams of temptation may be plied with tireless persistency by Satan, but so long as the will refuses to consent, not one stone in the walls of grace can be loosened by the enemy !

How wonderful is this gift of grace ! Not only is it the strength in which we fight, but it is the armour which renders us invulnerable. How carefully we should watch, lest by one traitorous act of the will we consent to mortal sin, and with our own hands throw down the walls which defend us !

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The stones are gathered out by the teachings and exhortations of Christ's Church. From our earliest years she has instructed us, warning us against the rocks in our own nature, and showing us how by the use of grace, and by the efforts of our own will, we may cast out of God's vineyard, our soul, the stones of evil which mar its beauty and spoil its fruitfulness.

Then again, our soul is planted with the choicest vine of Christ's Own Nature, for in baptism we are incorporated into Christ, made members of His Body, and the seed of a Christ-like nature is sown in us. The fertilizing streams of grace, especially in the Holy Communion, enable that vine to grow and fill the whole land of our nature. In the Holy Communion we feed the Christ within us with the Body and Blood of Christ "taken and received" in that Sacrament. And just as food enables the body of the child to grow to the stature of manhood, so if we correspond to the grace received in Communion, are we enabled by it to attain "unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."¹

God has also furnished the vineyard of our soul with a tower—the faculty of conscience—which when educated by the teachings of the Church, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and habitually and promptly obeyed, warns us at once of the approach of every foe, enables us intuitively to know what is right and what is wrong, and keeps watch for us against danger throughout our whole life.

Then, too, we have a winepress in the vineyard of the soul, by which its virtues are extracted—the winepress of the cross which our Lord has given us to bear. He trod the winepress alone in His Passion;² He bore for us the penalty of our sin; and He has given to each of us, as a mark of His love, a cross to bear—a part of His Own Cross; not

¹ Eph. iv. 13.

² Isaiah lxiii. 3.

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because He loves to see us suffer, but because He knows, and would teach us, that it is only by the cross that we can win the crown ; for the cross is the instrument by which the virtues of the soul are developed, by which the good wine of our regenerate nature is pressed out.

A vineyard without a winepress would be useless, for however abundantly it produced grapes, and however fine those grapes might be, they could produce no wine of themselves, even though they were to hang upon the branches until they decayed, or the birds devoured them. The husbandman must gather the grapes and put them in the winepress, that their juice may be extracted, and that the wine, the fruit of the vineyard, may be made.

What has not Christ done for our soul ! Redeemed it upon the Cross by His Own death ! Endowed it with every gift of grace and virtue, supplied it with the instruments needed for its sanctification ! And now He looks that it should bring forth grapes. And what does He find in our soul ? Wild grapes ? Natural virtues—which one who is not baptized, a good heathen, could produce just as well ? Here a challenge is sent us to judge ourselves, that we be not judged of the Lord, to judge between Him and His vineyard, whether He could have done more for us than He has done ; whether there is any needed gift which He has withheld.

And then listen to His warning. If we do not bring forth the fruits of good works, if we are content with the wild grapes of mere natural virtues, He threatens to withdraw those gifts which we have neglected to use, to take away the hedge, and break down the wall of grace, that our soul may be trodden down by worldliness and sin, that it may be laid waste, producing only the briars and thorns which are the natural growth of a soul separated from Christ.

In how many lives has not this taken place ! Those who once realized their relation to Christ, who delighted in His service—not so much perhaps by great acts of sin, as by neglect of religion, by forgetting God—have reduced the vineyard of their soul to a state of desolation. It brings forth wild grapes. They produce some natural virtues ; they may be amiable, philanthropic, even truthful, but not godly.

To such the parable of Isaiah is a challenge. To us it is a warning. Let us heed it, and strive by more careful husbandry in the vineyard of our soul to bring forth the fruit which Christ asks of us, that we may be able to say in the words of the Canticles, “ Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits.”¹

Sermon IV.

THE HANDMAID OF THE LORD.

(The Second Sunday in Advent.)

S. LUKE I, 38.

“ And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word.”



T. LUKE'S Gospel opens with the angel Gabriel's message of good tidings to Zacharias concerning the conception of S. John Baptist, and this is immediately followed by his announcement to the Blessed Virgin of the great honour God purposed to bestow upon her in choosing her to be the instrument of the

¹ Cant. iv. 16.

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Incarnation and the Mother of the Son of God. The lessons of the Annunciation are so many that we must confine ourselves to one, the lesson we may learn from Mary's answer to the angel, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

This was the greatest moment in the world's history, when the purpose of God and the destiny of the human race waited upon the decision of a human will. There are crises in individual lives, and crises in the history of the race; but this was both, and was the greatest crisis that the world has ever known.

What is a crisis? It is a separating, a judgment, a decision—that is, it is a judgment which has to be reached, a decision which has to be made, which will, as it were, lead to a separating of the ways of life. We sometimes speak of it as a turning-point for good or evil.

But what tremendous issues were hanging on the decision which Mary made! The moment for which the world was created had come, the moment when God was to take creation into Himself through the Incarnation. Mary had been chosen as the human instrument in the great Act; but, while God selected her on account of her fitness to be His instrument, God would not override her free will. His purposes are put before her. She asks one question—a question caused not by doubt or hesitation, but that she may fully comprehend what is required of her. The question is answered, and immediately Mary makes her decision, surrenders herself to God's purpose. Had her will acted differently, she would not have been the Mother of God. It would have been necessary to prepare another instrument for the accomplishment of the Incarnation.

Let us then to-day consider Mary's decision. We may observe in connection with it three points—the promptness

and wisdom of her decision, its humility, and the devotion to God's Will displayed in it.

I. The promptness and wisdom of Mary's decision was the result of her previous life and training. There are crises in the life of most men, which, though they may not recognize it, are really decided entirely by the fidelity to principle, and to the use of grace which has characterized their past lives.

A wise decision depends upon the right working of several powers of the soul. The will itself which makes the decision is but a blind guide, and has to rely upon the conscience, the intellect, the affections, and other faculties of the soul. If these are working rightly the decision will be a right decision; and that they may be acting rightly will depend very largely on what has gone before in the life; whether the conscience has been habitually obeyed or disobeyed; whether the intellect has been warped by indulgence in sin; whether the affections have been perverted by being fixed on unworthy objects.

In studying Mary's decision we have an opportunity of seeing how all these faculties of her pure soul worked perfectly together in correspondence with the Will of God. Conscience in its highest state is the verdict of the practical judgment, enlightened by the Holy Ghost, and educated by the teachings of God's Church; and thus it is habitually trained to recognize and obey God's voice. What was Mary's conscience?—It had never been trifled with; it had always been promptly obeyed; and so it had become an unerring guide to her will.

Then her intellect; how true it was! unclouded by any sin, and habitually exercised in the contemplation of God and of His revelation in Holy Scripture.

Again, her affections were detached from creatures and altogether set upon God. With greatest promptness there-

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fore, and with absolute certainty, conscience, intellect and affections, agreed in recognizing God's message and in accepting God's revealed purpose for her.

And then, her will had been trained to give immediate effect to the verdict of conscience. No venial sin had been allowed to weaken her will. So that without hesitation she answers "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."

There are some who find it very difficult to reach a decision on any important point. Sometimes the hesitation is caused by the temperament; more often it is the result of a weakened will or wounded conscience. Sometimes, of course, there may be a real difficulty in the subject to be decided, and this may require very careful consideration and very earnest prayer. But if we are striving always to keep our conscience true, and our intellect free from sin, and our affections pure, there ought to be little difficulty in making right decisions in all great crises of our lives.

II. Then we must notice the humility of the decision, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord." The privilege of becoming the Mother of God is the greatest conceivable to the human mind. And yet there is no trace of pride in Mary's heart in connection with it.

In the Magnificat the Blessed Virgin praises God because He has "regarded the low estate of His handmaiden." She does not say, because He has regarded her humility; for that would have been only a subtle form of pride, such as we often detect when people talk about their humility. True humility is so natural that it scarcely recognizes its own existence. What Mary spoke of was not her humility, but her "low estate"; for God had chosen one who was, in her own sight, of low estate among the daughters of her people; not rich, or powerful, or exalted in worldly

position; but one who, while of noble family, lived in obscurity.

Humility is the recognition of our true relation to God—that is, of our absolute dependence upon Him for everything. The first beatitude is the beatitude of humility: “Blessed are the poor in spirit”—that is, those who realize their dependence upon God for everything; for the word (πτωχοί,) translated “poor,” really means beggars—not those who have little, but those who have nothing, and who, in realizing this, love to depend for everything upon God and His goodness.

III. Lastly, let us observe Mary’s devotion to the Will of God—“Be it unto me according to thy word.” What a wonderful force a human will is! What marvellous effects a strong will has accomplished in the history of our race in changing the currents of national life! But how insignificant is the strongest human will in comparison with the Will of God; for the Will of God is that force which has called all things into being—more, which preserves everything in existence, and orders the daily course, perhaps, of countless worlds and of all their inhabitants. It will help us in our devotion to God’s Will if we realize that it is Omnipotent, that it is guided by Omniscience, and that it is the expression of Eternal Love!

The Will of God is Omnipotent; and yet it halts at the threshold of each human will; for God, in creating man in His own image, gave to each individual a strange power, the gift of free will, the power of choice; and God never overrules that free will. We can accept God’s Will and conform our will to it; and this will ever be our highest happiness. Or we can *for ourselves* resist God’s Will; and if this be persevered in to the end it will be our eternal misery; for our resistance to God’s Will will not hinder

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God's purpose from being accomplished, but it will cause us to forfeit the privilege of being God's instrument in fulfilling that purpose. We may reject God's purpose *for ourselves*; we cannot alter His purpose for our race; for God's Will is Omnipotent. Let us take two simple illustrations of this:

God purposed to become Incarnate, and chose Mary as the instrument for carrying out His Will. His purpose was clearly set before her. Her will was free to accept or reject God's offer. She unhesitatingly surrendered herself to be the instrument for carrying out God's Will, and from henceforth all generations were to call her blessed; blessed, because the Mother of God; blessed above all women; blessed beyond every child of man!

The other example is that of Judas. He was chosen by our Lord to be one of the twelve apostles; chosen because he had special gifts for the apostolate; he was endowed with all the graces which were needed to enable him to fulfil his vocation; he was trained by our Lord Himself in all that pertained to his office. And yet he chose to reject God's call. He was unfaithful to his vocation. And what was the result? God's purpose was not hindered, except in so far as the instrument, Judas, was concerned; for Matthias took his place, did his work, and received his reward. God's Will was done, God's purpose was accomplished; but one human instrument was substituted for another; because Judas, by the exercise of the free will which God would not override, rejected the privilege which He willed to confer upon him.

But God's Will is not a mere blind force, Almighty though it be. It is guided by Omniscience, and this means that all things are present to God—all things, the past, present and future. God's Will for me takes into account

everything connected with me—my possibilities of greatness, my tendencies to weakness, my surroundings, my hopes and fears, and my desires. God's Will, because it is guided by Omniscience, must therefore always will for me that which is best for me. In conforming my will to His, and surrendering myself to Him, I am not merely bowing down before Omnipotence, but Omnipotence which knows absolutely my needs, and my capacity.

And lastly, God's Will is the expression of His love ; for God is love. And this thought, even more than the two we have already considered, should help us to have a great devotion to the Will of God ; for He not only knows our needs, knows our possibilities, but He loves us ! It was His love that called me into being ; it has been His love which has preserved me until to-day, bringing me safely through many dangers of which I never knew ; surrounding me with many blessings which, perhaps, I took as a matter of course, and never thanked Him for as I should.

And greatest of all the gifts He wills to bestow upon me, is the knowledge of His love. He tells me that He loves me. He has proved that love, not only by my creation, by my preservation, and all the blessings of this life ; but by His death upon the Cross ; for "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."¹

The Will of God is the expression of the love of God for me. Love demands love in return. How can I ever hesitate to conform my will to that of my Father in heaven, when I realize His Omnipotence, His Omniscience, and His Love ?

Mary's life was a life of devotion to God's Will ; so that in the supreme moment when the angel Gabriel revealed to her God's purpose in regard to the Incarnation, she was

¹S. John xv. 13.

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enabled at once to respond in loving and humble surrender of self, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord ; be it unto me according to thy word."

Let us strive to learn this practical lesson from the story of the Annunciation,—to follow, at however great a distance, Mary's virtues, Mary's devotion to God's Will, that we may in some measure share in her beatitude.

Sermon V.

AN ACT OF FAITH.

(The Third Sunday in Advent.)

✓
ISAIAH XXV. I.

"O Lord, Thou art my GOD ; I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name ; for Thou hast done wonderful things ; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."



AFTER foretelling God's judgment upon His rebellious people, Isaiah in this chapter is transported to the far distant future, and, looking back upon the whole of God's work for His Church, sings his psalm of praise and thanksgiving. We may notice both in the construction and phraseology of this song of triumph the influence of the first great Biblical thanksgiving, the hymn¹ in which Moses celebrated the passage of the Israelites through the Red Sea.

Isaiah, as a devout Jew, had read again and again the song of Moses for the deliverance of Israel from their Egyptian oppressors, and in his psalm of rejoicing it is

¹ Cf. Ex. xv.

natural that he should show the influence of that great pæan of victory. Let us not, however, consider its historical setting to-day so much as its didactic value as a wonderful example of a great "act of faith."

I. "O Lord, Thou art my God." This is not a prayer, but something higher—"an act of faith." Prayer is largely concerned with man's needs, and so necessarily has in it an element of selfishness. In an act of faith man looks away from himself to God, and, recognizing what God is, strives to express his conception of God's greatness.

But what do we mean by an *act* of faith? We mean an expression of faith in which the will has its part. Every act, to be meritorious or blameworthy, must proceed from the will. Actions which are more or less instinctive or involuntary, as the instinctive withdrawal of the hand when we accidentally touch something which burns us, are not, strictly speaking, "human" actions; since any animal would do the same, and there is in them no real exercise of the will.

A human act, as defined in moral theology, is one in which the will acts deliberately, and therefore is one for which we are responsible. While the will is the sovereign power of the soul, its government is not despotic but constitutional, that is to say, it ought to govern in accordance with the counsels of its ministers of state, who may be roughly said to preside over two departments, namely, the department of the intellect, and that of the affections. The judgment of the intellect issues in the voice of conscience, and the will on the other side is influenced by the voice or voices of the affections.

Indeed, we may regard the will in our fallen nature as a blind giant, depending for guidance upon the other powers of the soul—a giant, for the will is mighty in its power, and

yet blind since it cannot act independently, but must have a motive. As Samson in the idols' temple, after his enemies have put out his eyes, depended on a lad to guide him to the pillars whereon the house stood, and when he had grasped them was able to pull down the whole house and to destroy his Philistine foes,¹ so the will depends for its guidance upon the judgment of the intellect on the one side, and on the other upon the clamours of the affections—sometimes of the passions.

Each offers itself as guide, and the will has to choose; and its most perfect operation is manifested when both guides concur, so that the action of the will corresponds both with the judgment of the intellect and the desires of the affections.

What we have said of the will may seem, perhaps, pedantic, but it is necessary that we should understand its operation if we are to realize all that is involved in an act of faith, for an act of faith should be the utterance of the whole nature, the will giving effect both to the conclusions of the reason and to the desires of the affections. An act of faith seems so simple; it is tremendous, for it involves the operation of the whole soul.

✓ “O Lord, Thou art my God.” What do we mean by “GOD”? The Supreme Being, Perfect in Wisdom, Power and Love; Omnipresent, Omniscient, Immutable, Eternal, Infinite. Yes, we mean all this, and more. And yet a belief in this would not enable me to make an act of faith. It might be sufficient to enable me to say, “O Lord, Thou art God.”

But this is not what Isaiah says. A very little word is added which transforms the whole clause, and without removing it from the sphere of dogma causes it to embrace that of personal religion and to express man's sense of his personal relation to God. “O Lord, Thou art *my* God.”

¹ Cf. Judges xvi. 25-31.

And what does this imply? All the difference between an intellectual conclusion and a moral conviction. The devils believe in God, and tremble. They could say, "O Lord, Thou art God." They cannot say, "Thou art my God."

This act of faith implies not only that the intellect recognizes what God is, but that the affections reach out after God, and that the will, guided alike to its end by both intellect and affections, takes the Lord for its God. It implies absolute trust and adoring love; it implies an act of self-surrender by which we take the Perfect and Supreme Being to be the Lord of our life, the Love of our hearts, the Object of our worship.

It implies the difference between one who is intellectually a believer and one who has personal religion. It implies what S. Paul calls the "obedience of faith."¹ It implies that the faith, the objective faith, which has begun in the intellect, has been accepted by the affections, and controls the whole nature.

If we can truly say these words, "O Lord, Thou art my God," realizing their force, we shall be the happiest of men, for our relation to God being right and being realized, our lives will be righteous; since they will be guided by God's commandments and will have for their end God's glory. We shall rely upon God's strength, and shall experience God's peace; for as Isaiah says, "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee."²

This is not the peace which insures freedom from struggle, but the peace of assured safety in the struggle; the peace of God which passeth understanding, which the world cannot give and cannot take away.

Sometimes, perhaps, on a stormy winter's night, when

¹ Rom. i. 5.

² Isaiah xxvi. 3.

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the wind is howling around, and the rain beating upon the window-pane, we realize as we sit together over the fire a sense of security and comfort, which is enhanced by contrast with the storm without. We think of others who are exposed to its fury, and we thank God for the shelter of our own home and the warmth of our own hearth. So is it with the man whose act of faith enables him to claim God as his God. He is at peace within even though the storm is raging without; in his soul the Prince of Peace reigns, even though the battle is being waged fiercely all around him. He has taken the Lord for his God, and therefore is he safe. He can say, "Under the shadow of Thy wings shall be my refuge, until this tyranny be overpast."

II. But now let us return to the passage we chose for our text, and examine more carefully the jewel in its setting. There is (1) the act of faith, "O Lord, Thou art my God." (2) Then its result, "I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name." (3) Then the reason for this, "for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth."

1. The act of faith proceeds from personal religion; for having taken God as the Supreme Ruler of our life, the intellect loves to seek into the mysteries of His Being, revealed in Holy Scripture, and in the experiences of Divine Providence; the will strives to be obedient to His commandments and precepts, and the affections find their joy in reaching out to Him as the Object of their love.

2. The result of this is expressed in the next two clauses—"I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name." And by "Name," let us remember, we mean when we speak of God His character—what He is. Some, however, may ask, "How can we exalt God? Is He not already as exalted as it is possible for Him to be?"

This question is really similar to the one so often asked, "How can we glorify God? Can we add in any way to His essential glory?" We cannot exalt God in the sense of raising Him any higher than He is, but we can proclaim to others, by our words and in our lives, that we recognize Him to be the Most High. This is what is meant by exalting God. And again while we cannot add to God's essential glory we can glorify Him in our lives by fulfilling the purpose for which He created us, which was for His glory and for our own eternal happiness.

Isaiah says, "I will exalt Thee, I will praise Thy Name." If we have this personal religion, if we can make this all-embracing act of faith, we shall praise God not only with our lips but in our lives, by giving up ourselves to His service. And how wonderful will then be the effect of our praises upon others, greater far than the most eloquent sermon!

What the world needs for God's glory and man's salvation now is not merely eloquence. There are many men in the world of great eloquence, whose preaching delights those who listen, but does not really influence their lives. The stumbling-block to Christianity in our days is not lack of eloquent preaching, but want of saintly lives. If we could praise God in our lives by giving up ourselves to His service, by showing that the Lord is indeed our God, in such a sense that He controls all our conduct, that He satisfies all our desires, our life would be a more eloquent and convincing plea for Christianity than the most perfectly delivered discourse!

This, then, is the result of the prophet's act of faith—he determines to glorify and to praise God in his life.

3. But he proceeds to give the reason for this—"For Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are

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faithfulness and truth." Which might be better rendered, "Thou hast wrought wonders, counsels of old in faithfulness and truth."

(a) Thou hast wrought wonders in our lives, in the lives of the saints, in the Church of God. How helpful it is to meditate on these wonders, on the great things that God has done for us! He has done great things *for* us, and if we are able to say, "O Lord, Thou art my God"; to make this act of faith, then indeed God has wrought wonders *in* us!

Again, in the lives of His saints—and next to the Holy Scripture the lives of the saints are the most valuable reading a Christian can have, for in them we see the wonders of God's works. The saints were men and women like ourselves, with the same infirmities, the same temptations, the same difficulties, but by grace they overcame them all, and their wonderful lives were the result of God's work in them.

And yet again in the Church of God. It is helpful to read its history, for what is it? The story of God's wonderful works, and man's poor correspondence with those works.

(b) "Thou hast wrought wonders; counsels of old." Aye, from Eternity! There was that counsel by which, before the world was made, God willed to become incarnate in human nature, and to raise His creature, man, to a nature Divine, and that counsel by which God, when He foreknew the Fall of man, willed to redeem man by the sacrifice of the Cross, by the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. Truly, God's counsels of old have been wonderful in their mercy and love!

(c) "In faithfulness and truth." All God's wonders, all God's counsels, have been in faithfulness and truth. The

covenant He made with man He has kept, and therefore Isaiah was able to make his act of faith in God, his act of trust; for faith has both its objective and subjective side. It enables us first to believe that God is, then to learn from revelation what God is, and when we have learned this, to trust God with our whole soul.

A little child is an example of this faith. With its father at hand it is not worried about the future. If danger threatens, it feels safe at his side. Even in the darkness, if it can hold his hand it does not fear. So with us; if our act of faith is real, it will issue in a perfect trust in God.

Remember that when Isaiah wrote these words everything around him was at its very darkest. The Assyrian invasion was threatening, and dissension prevailed among the ministers of Hezekiah; Shebna and Eliakim desiring to meet it by an alliance with Egypt, while Isaiah strove to keep Judah free from any such entangling union, and to teach Hezekiah and the people that their strength lay in trusting God. But, dark as was the outlook, Isaiah bears witness that God's counsels are in faithfulness and truth; that though they may be brought to naught by man's rebellious perversity, God is always the strength of those who put their trust in Him.

Here, then, we see that a real act of faith involves perfect trust in God. How prominent this factor always is in the lives of the saints! They trusted God, and when God put their trustfulness to the test they only rejoiced in the opportunity of proving how fully they trusted Him.

There is a story told of S. John of the Cross, who in the 16th century under the influence of S. Theresa attempted a reform of the Carmelite Order. One of the evils which he desired to obviate was begging. The monks were in the habit of begging their food. They were not, like the

Franciscan Monks, a mendicant Order, and S. John felt that this practice had a great deal to do with the unsatisfactory condition of the Order. Going out into the world to beg, he found a great cause of spiritual dissipation, and so in the monastery over which he presided he put a stop to it, telling the monks that God knew their needs, and that as begging was not part of their rule they should trust God to supply their needs by putting it into people's hearts to send them what was necessary for their sustenance.

One day he was told that there was no food in the house. But he was not troubled by the news. The Community came to the refectory according to custom at the appointed hour. A fragment of bread was found, and by his direction brought into the refectory, and grace was said, for he had given orders that no change should be made. The fathers sat down before an empty table, and S. John spoke to them of the hidden graces of poverty, of the merit of suffering and of conformity to the will of God, with so much unction that the fathers left the refectory with their hearts on fire, and gave thanks to God for His special mercy in leaving them that day without food to eat.

They withdrew to their cells, and no sooner had they begun to prepare themselves for prayer than the whole house was disturbed by a loud knocking at the outer gate. The porter went to the door, and saw there a man with a letter in his hand addressed to the Vicar. The porter took it, and finding S. John in the Church before the Most Holy, gave it to him. The saint opened it, and as soon as he saw what it meant began to cry like a man in pain. The porter was greatly distressed, and begged the saint to tell him why he was weeping so bitterly. The saint replied: "I cry, my brother, because God thinks us too weak to bear hunger any longer. He could not trust us for one day, and is send-

ing us food,"¹ for the letter told of two mules laden with provisions on the way to the house.

I am not proposing this particular act of trust for your example, but rather its spirit. When God puts our faith to the test by allowing adversity to befall us, how often we think, and perhaps say, that God is dealing hardly, if not cruelly with us; and we are greatly disturbed; instead of, like S. John, thanking God for the opportunity of testing and proving our trust in Him. It is very easy to persuade ourselves that we will trust God when we are in prosperity, but when adversity comes, then is the opportunity to prove the reality of our faith.

There is only one sort of religion, my brethren, that is of any real value, and that is personal religion, such religion as is expressed by Isaiah's act of faith, and which enables us not merely to believe that there is a God, not only to understand the teaching of the Church in regard to the Being of God and His attributes, but with our will as well as our intellect to make an act of faith in Him, saying, "O Lord, Thou art *my* God." This religion enables us to trust God, to love God, to live for God. If we have not this personal realization of our relation to God, this personal religion, let us strive by every means in our power to obtain it; but if we have it, let us make every effort to keep it and to deepen it.

¹ Life of S. John of the Cross, by David Lewis, pp. 138, 139.

Sermon VI.

THE BENEDICTUS.

(The Third Sunday in Advent.)

S. LUKE I. 67, 68.

"And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord GOD of Israel; for He hath visited and redeemed His people."

 HE Benedictus is the Canticle of Advent, sung after the Incarnation and on the very threshold of the birth of Christ—the inspired work of the long dumbness of Zacharias, which finds utterance at the moment his speech is restored to him. We may observe that the aged priest speaks of the promise of God as already fulfilled. He does not say that the Lord shall visit and redeem His people, but in using the aorist he indicates the fact as already accomplished, and manifests his knowledge of the Incarnation of the Son of God which had already taken place; for we must remember that the Benedictus was uttered at the circumcision of S. John Baptist, which was some three months after the visitation of S. Elizabeth, and so midway between the Annunciation and the birth of Christ.

The Incarnation, therefore, was an accomplished fact; the Son of God had come. Although yet in His Mother's womb, He had been recognized and adored by the unborn child of Elizabeth; for His Mother bore witness that, as soon as the voice of Mary's salutation sounded in her ears,

the babe leaped in her womb for joy.¹ This Zacharias knew, and therefore speaks of the Messianic promise as fulfilled, although the work Christ came to do was not yet accomplished.

The position of the Benedictus as one of the Canticles in our daily office of Matins makes it important that we should study carefully both the construction and teaching of the hymn, in order that we may sing it with intelligence—not only as a grand example of Hebrew poetry, but as a prophecy of Christian life. It had already found a place in the office of Lauds in the beginning of the 9th century, since Amalarius speaks of it as part of that office about the year 820; but at what time it was first introduced into the Services of the Church is uncertain.

Some have ascribed its introduction to S. Cæsarius of Arles in the 6th century, others to S. Benedict. These two saints died within a year of one another—S. Cæsarius in 542, S. Benedict in 543. But the evidence of their agency in the introduction of the Benedictus is by no means conclusive. It has been in the English Prayer Book since 1549—that is, since our first Prayer Book was issued.

I. The Benedictus begins with praise and thanksgiving for the promise fulfilled by the coming of the Messiah, and therefore for the redemption of His people. This mighty salvation, which proceeded from the house of David, was in accordance with the predictions of holy prophets from the very beginning of the world, the first Messianic prophecy being regarded as that which foretold that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head.² These prophecies promised national deliverance both from enemies and from those who, while not nominally enemies, hated the Jews. In Zacharias' time the enemies denoted foreign oppressors

¹ Cf. S. Luke i. 44.

² Cf. Gen. iii. 15.

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—the Romans; while the native tyrants—Herod and his party, hateful to the Jews—were regarded as also hating them.

Thus far the hymn is entirely theocratic, and such as a patriotic Jew would be likely to utter in view of the oppression from which his country was suffering. Indeed, while the Holy Ghost, with which Zacharias was filled, inspired him to utterances which we understand in an entirely Christian light, the priest himself probably interpreted them from the standpoint of a patriotic Jew; and it was not until after the extinction of all national hope by the destruction of Jerusalem, that the Canticle was confined to its Christian interpretation.

The mercy of God, manifested in the coming of the Messiah, is recognized as the fulfilment of a covenant between God and the Jewish patriarchs, traced back to the days of Abraham himself.

II. At this point we come to the real marrow of the hymn, which, in describing Messiah's work, puts on an entirely Christian character and becomes a prophecy of Christian life.

1. The first effect of Christ's work is deliverance from enemies, not merely from the national foes of the Jews, but from the enemies of the soul. And this implies a twofold deliverance—from the guilt of sin which separates us from God's grace, and renders us displeasing to Him—and from the captivity to sin, in the shape of evil habits, which makes us incapable of helping ourselves or of serving God, however much we may wish to do so.

The first gift of Christ to the soul, which we describe under the theological term "justification," is the gift of a new nature, by which we become children of God, instead of children of wrath; the guilt of our sins is forgiven, and

their power over us is broken ; so that we not only become pleasing to God, but by His grace are enabled to resist temptation to old habits of sin.

2. We next have pointed out the *purpose* of this deliverance. We are delivered from slavery to sin, that we may become the servants of God, that we may "serve Him without fear," that is, in the spirit of filial love. One of the delusions most prevalent among men is that they can be independent. This is, however, impossible. Man was created to *serve* ; it is his noblest dignity ; and he must choose the filial service of God, or the degraded slavery of the world, the flesh, or the devil.

The gift, then, of justification enables us, by an act of our own free will, to enter the service of God, not serving Him with fear as though He were a tyrant, but with love as our Heavenly Father. This Christ came to teach, both by word and example. He said, "I am among you as He that serveth."¹ His whole life was a life of service ; and in this, as in other things, He tells us to follow Him.

The character of our service is indicated in the words : "In holiness and righteousness before Him," "holiness" perhaps referring to the negative side of Christian life and service—freedom from sin ; and "righteousness" to the active fulfilment of Christian duty. But all our service is to be *before* God—that is, in His sight. In all our relations with our fellow-men, in all our work in the world, we are to serve "Not with eye-service, as men pleasers, but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart ; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not to men."² This is what is meant by serving God in holiness and righteousness *before Him*—doing all things in His grace, for His glory, offering all to God.

¹ S. Luke xxii. 27.

² Ephes. vi. 6, 7.

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“All the days of our life”; or, as we should perhaps read, “all our days.” The service of God must be lifelong; and that this may be so we must diligently pray for the gift of final perseverance. It will not do to enter upon God’s service with enthusiasm, and then gradually to desert it because we are engrossed in the service of the world and cannot serve two masters.

We must serve faithfully to the end, remembering that we know not when our Master will come to call us away from the service of earth; recalling Christ’s own words, “Blessed are those servants whom the Lord, when He cometh, shall find watching; verily I say unto you that He shall gird Himself and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them.”¹

III. So far the Benedictus has been a gradual ascent, describing the coming of the Messiah and the purpose of His Advent; recognizing in it the fulfilment of covenanted promise and prophecy, and culminating in the description of its effects in freeing man from sin that he may enter the service of God.

Now from these lofty heights Zacharias looks down for a moment upon the little child who was to play so great a part in preparing Israel for the Messiah’s work, and paraphrases the angel’s prophecy in these words, “And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give (τοῦ δοῦναι) knowledge of salvation unto His people in the remission (ἐν ἀφέσει) of their sins.” The clause “to give knowledge of salvation” should be translated “for the purpose of giving.”

This throws a vivid light on the purpose of S. John’s work as the forerunner of Christ. Why was it needed?

¹ S. Luke xii. 37.

Because the very idea of salvation had become perverted in Israel, and required to be corrected before that salvation could be appropriated.

A carnal patriotism had so taken possession of the Jewish people and their rulers that the idea of a political deliverance from foreign oppressors had been substituted for that of a moral salvation. Hence, S. John precedes Christ for the purpose of giving a true knowledge of salvation to God's people in the remission of their sins, teaching them that the evil to be dreaded was not subjection to the Romans, but divine condemnation; and, therefore, that salvation consisted, not in temporal freedom from foreign foes, but in the forgiveness of sins.

The Jews were blind to the way of salvation, and S. John Baptist was to show to this people—who thought that all they required was political freedom—that they were not less guilty than the heathen whom they despised, and that they needed divine pardon of their sins. This was the true meaning of the symbolical baptism to which he invited the Jews.

IV. After this episode Zacharias returns to the principal subject of his song, and in a grand climax describes the full effect of Messiah's advent. It is through the tender mercy of God that He comes. Here is a recognition that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son";¹ and that by His advent "the dayspring from on high hath visited us, to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace." In this the Hebrew priest seems to see beyond the horizon of Israel, and at the close of his splendid prophecy to catch sight of the distant isles of the Gentiles over which darkness had brooded for ages.

¹S. John iii. 16.

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This imagery is derived from the magnificence of the Eastern sunrise. Some have also thought¹ that it represents a caravan which has missed its way, stumbling in the darkness of the desert—the unfortunate pilgrims, overtaken by night, sitting down in the midst of this fearful darkness, expecting death! The rising of the sun, however, renews their courage, and enables them to find the road which leads them to the end of their journey.

Whether this be so or not, this image certainly well represents Christian life. All was darkness before Christ came; all is darkness now where Christ is not known. In the dawning of the Light of the world, in the rising of the Sun of Righteousness, nations which lay in darkness and the shadow of death, have been able to find their way into paths of peace.

But we may, perhaps, better apply this to the individual soul straying from the right way, lost in the darkness of sin. When Christ dawns upon that soul, rises in that heart, He gives, first, light to see it's true self, it's true misery; and then, guidance into the way of peace. And what is that way, but the way which leads to Christ, Who is our Peace? The light of Christ reveals the misery of sin—and more—the path which leads to Him. And when Christ is found, the worst part of the journey is over; for in His arms we are safe, under His guidance we cannot miss the way which leads to the land of which He is King, and where He has prepared a special place for each of His faithful servants.

¹ Godet in loco.

Sermon VII.

GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE PENITENT.

(The Fourth Sunday in Advent.)

ISAIAH XXX. 19-21.

"For the people shall dwell in Zion at Jerusalem: thou shalt weep no more: He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction, yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying: 'This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left.'"

1.  HE earlier part of the Book of Isaiah is largely concerned with the threatening power of Assyria under her kings Sargon and Sennacherib. The great question of the day at Jerusalem was how to meet this approaching danger. The politicians clamoured for an alliance with Egypt; Isaiah exhorted to a reliance upon God.

It was not merely that an alliance with Egypt was inconsistent with real trust in God and loyalty to his teachings, since Egypt represented all that Israel was to avoid; but also that as a man of good judgment and a true statesman, Isaiah saw the folly of trusting in a nation which was at that time divided itself, two rulers struggling for the mastery, and which, while great in promises and tireless in intrigue, had no real strength, as was evidenced by the disastrous defeat which Sargon had inflicted upon Egypt a few years before.

In exhorting the nation to rely upon God for preservation

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under the threatened attack of the Assyrians, Isaiah foretells, in the words of my text, a siege, with the privations which a siege entails, "the bread of adversity and the water of affliction"—that is to say, short rations and almost famine; but promises that, in spite of this, their teachers—or probably more correctly their teacher—shall not be removed, that their eyes shall see their teacher, and their ears shall hear his words, and he further foretells a sudden and complete deliverance.

For their sin in rebelling against God, Isaiah sees that they need punishment in order that God may vindicate His justice, and thus, by the discipline of affliction, that the nation may be sanctified. So he tells them that God will punish His chosen people by allowing the Assyrians to besiege Jerusalem, but assures them that God in mercy will hear their cry, and throughout their affliction God will be with them. They shall see His providence and shall hear His counsel, and after having suffered awhile shall be delivered from their distress.

II. Such is the historical setting of our text, such its primary interpretation. Now let us consider it in its application to all times and to all people. It is God's message to the penitent.

"Therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you. . . . He will be very gracious unto thee at the voice of thy cry; when He shall hear it, He will answer thee. And though the Lord give you the bread of adversity."

In these words we have, first, the assurance of God's graciousness—that He longs to be gracious, that He waits for the cry of the penitent, that He may hear and answer it! But Isaiah warns the true penitent that God *must* punish, not in anger but in love, because penance, the discipline of suffering, is an essential part of penitence.

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Those who have never known true contrition mistake a sorrow for the consequences of sin for penitence. Penitence flows from a sorrow for having *sinned* against God, for having outraged His love, for having done despite to the Passion of His dear Son ; not from the selfish sorrow which springs from the punishment or loss to ourselves which the consequences of our sin entail.

True penitence, then, implies willingness to do penance, to suffer the temporal consequences of our sins. The penitent prays, "Lord, punish me, but forgive me,"—he seeks to remove the guilt of sin, not to escape its penalty. If we are truly sorry for our sins, because by them we have offended God, we shall be glad to eat the bread of adversity and to drink the water of affliction, if only we can have the promise that our Teacher, God the Holy Ghost, shall not be removed from us, that our eyes shall not be blind to our sins, but open to see how grievous they are.

If our eyes are thus opened we shall be able to understand the teachings of the Holy Spirit about sin and penitence in Scripture ; and, better still, we shall hear His voice pleading with us, speaking through our own consciences, convincing us of sin, leading us to penitence, to forgiveness, to deliverance from the bondage of sin.

Then, too, we must not expect to escape the siege of our spiritual foes. By our sins in the past we have revealed to them our weakness. They know to what habits of sin we have yielded ; they realize just what temptations will have most effect upon us ; and because once we surrendered ourselves as captives, once we invited them to enter the citadel of our soul, and like Hezekiah¹ betrayed to them all its secrets, even though now by penitence they have been driven out, and the bulwarks of grace have once more been

¹ Cf. 2 Kings xx. 15.

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thrown up around us, yet we must expect that they will besiege us continually, attacking the points which they know are weakest, and striving to seduce us to sin by the old temptations which succeeded so well before.

And this is really for our good, for it is only by resisting the sins to which we have once yielded, that we can really conquer them. It is only by being constantly attacked in our weak points that they can be made strong, only by struggle that the latent powers of our spiritual life can be developed.

The penances of our sin are many, for besides the direct consequences of misdoing in this world, such as loss of health by the drunkard, loss of fortune by the spendthrift, loss of reputation by the dishonest, there is also one which God generally allows—the continuance of old temptations—and this, as we have seen, for our own good, for the purpose of developing strength where we are weakest.

III. "Yet shall not thy teachers be removed into a corner any more, but thine eyes shall see thy teachers: And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."

If God warns us that true penitence involves the glad acceptance of penance—that is, of the penalties in this life of our sin, of the discipline which we need for our moral restoration—God also graciously assures us that He will be with us to teach us and to guide us.

In the second of the penitential Psalms, after speaking of the happiness of forgiveness, and the means by which it may be obtained, there comes the assurance of guidance for the future, for God says, "I will inform thee, and teach thee in the way wherein thou shalt go: I will guide thee with Mine eye."¹ So we find always associated with the for-

¹ Psalm xxxii. 9.

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givenness of sin the promise of help and guidance in the future.

What is God's message on this point in the passage of Isaiah which we are considering—"Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left."? The image suggests either a shepherd going before his flock, or a teacher followed by his disciples. He is before their eyes while they follow him in the right path, but if they look away from him, and turn aside from him, leaving the right way, his watchful eye at once detects their error, and his loving voice warns them of it. Thine ear shall hear a voice behind thee. Why "behind"? Because it assumes that we are no longer following Christ, that we are straying from the narrow way, and that the Good Shepherd, Who, "when He putteth forth His own sheep . . . goeth before them";¹ when His sheep turn back, quickly calls after them with words of love and warning.

This warning voice may come to us in many ways; chiefly it is through the voice of Conscience, enlightened by the Holy Ghost—Conscience, which, when we turn to the right hand or to the left, warns us that we are going wrong, and before we have strayed any distance calls us back to the path of right and duty.

How wonderful is the Conscience of a true penitent! how tender, how prompt to speak, how quick to apprehend what is wrong! The world has a proverb that "Second thoughts are the best." But the world's proverbs are generally wrong, at least in the sphere of morals. Second thoughts are not the best in spiritual matters. As a good Bishop² once said, "First thoughts are God's thoughts; second thoughts are the devil's; third thoughts, again, are God's

¹S. John x. 4. ²The late Right Rev. A. P. Forbes, Bishop of Brechin.

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thoughts." And he explained this by pointing out that when we are tempted to turn aside from the path of duty to the right hand or to the left, the first voice to speak to us is the voice of Conscience warning us, of which Isaiah tells us, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." The second voice is that of the tempter supplying us with specious arguments for not listening to the warnings of Conscience, suggesting excuses for continuing in the way we have chosen, rather than in the path of duty in which God is guiding us. Then, generally, the third thought is the voice of Conscience again, calling us and recalling us to the right way.

If we investigate our own experiences of temptation, how often we shall find this exemplified. When we began to do wrong there was the thought, "I ought not to do this—it is wrong." Conscience spoke. Then came excuse after excuse, argument after argument, how we might make an exception, perhaps, in this particular case. And then, when these arguments had done their work, and we were about to proceed in the wrong path, again there came the warning voice of Conscience, "This is not right—I ought not to do it."

When next you are tempted in this way, remember the words of Isaiah, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way," and realize that this voice is the fulfilment of God's promise to the penitent, that thy Teacher shall not be removed, that thine eyes shall be opened to see the right way, that thine ears shall hear a voice saying, "This is the way," and then be careful to follow that voice, to obey it promptly, never to argue with it, and it will lead you in the narrow path, through the strait gate which will bring you to heaven.

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This passage of Isaiah is God's message to the penitent, and at what season can it come more appropriately than on the last Sunday in Advent, when we are standing on the threshold of Christmas? For now we are preparing not only to celebrate the birth of our Lord into this world of woe, but to begin again to follow His life on earth, His historical life from the cradle to the grave, that we may learn how to live during our sojourn here, how to follow in His steps, how to reach our true home.

We cannot follow Christ whilst we are tied down by the chain of our sins. We must begin with penitence. The Psalmist says, "I will run the way of Thy commandments: when Thou hast set my heart at liberty."¹ In Holy Scripture the heart is put for the will, the centre of action, not for the affections. Our heart must be set at liberty, our will must be free from bondage to sin before we can *run* the way of God's commandments. When we are captives to sin, we cannot even *walk* in the way of God's commandments. But when our will is free, and we have given ourselves up to God's service of our own choice, then we shall be able to run in His ways, to keep His laws with diligence, because we love Him and have given our hearts to Him. Then shall we run the way of God's commandments, with the joyous consciousness that if we make a false step, if in our haste we miss the way, we shall hear a voice behind us, saying, "You are going wrong; this is the way, walk ye in it."

¹ Psalm cxix. 32.

Sermon VIII.

THE PREACHING OF S. JOHN BAPTIST.

(The Fourth Sunday in Advent.)

S. LUKE III. 3.

“And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.”



T. LUKE, after recording in the first chapter the events which preceded the Nativity of Christ, and in the second the Nativity itself with its attendant circumstances—the Adoration of the shepherds, the Presentation in the temple, and the brief record of our Lord's Childhood—in this third chapter passes on to a very striking and suggestive account of the work of S. John Baptist in preparing through his public ministry the way for our Lord's advent.

I. In this account S. Luke evidently draws from sources independent of the other Synoptists, and gives us a much clearer view of the character of the work of the great Forerunner. In the Benedictus it was prophesied of him that he should “go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto His people in the remission of their sins.”¹ And it is impossible rightly to appreciate S. John's work or its true character unless we have some clear grasp of the Messianic ideas which had gradually taken possession of the minds of almost all Israel. I say “almost all”; for there was ever a faithful remnant who studied the Scriptures, and looked for the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness.

¹S. Luke i. 76, 77.

But the conceptions of the earlier period of Jewish greatness, when the people looked for a holier monarch than David, a mightier one than Solomon, had given place, in the long period of misfortune which succeeded the prosperous times of the Jewish monarchy, to a very different idea. At first, they longed for a Deliverer. And then as the ages rolled on, and oppression and misfortune grew worse, they substituted for a Deliverer an Avenger. Their Messiah must not only be one who should deliver them from those foreign foes so long their oppressors, but one who should exact from these nations a severe penalty for their treatment of Israel.

It had, therefore, come to pass that the hopes which centred around the Messiah were almost entirely political; that the salvation to which they looked forward was a salvation from foreign oppression, not from moral evil. Indeed, they had come to think of themselves as the only perfect nation in God's sight, and as needing no moral regeneration, only political freedom. Their spiritual arrogance grew as their political fortunes became darker and darker. An eternity of bliss, of which they alone were to be partakers, was the only thing in their estimation which could make up for the woes they were made to suffer in this world; while an eternity of anguish for the nations outside Israel was a fitting recompense for the indignities which the Gentile world had inflicted upon God's chosen people.

Hence the change needed by the Jews in preparation for Christ's advent was a moral change—a conviction of sin, a realization that their need was personal salvation from sin, not merely deliverance from foreign oppression. The work of our Lord's Forerunner was therefore to turn the minds of the people from vengeance for national wrongs to hopes of spiritual emancipation—to raise their thoughts from an

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earthly kingdom of political power to God's kingdom of moral righteousness.

II. And how did S. John accomplish this work? By "preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." We may call attention here to a point which is sometimes misunderstood. Baptism was not at this time practised among the Jews. It was not even used in the admission of pagan proselytes to Judaism, as is sometimes stated, for this did not become a national custom until after the Fall of Jerusalem. Moreover, S. John's very title, "The Baptist," taken together with the question of the Pharisees: "Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?"¹ seems to indicate that baptism was altogether unusual, and that the introduction of this novel rite could only be justified by one who came with the special authority of Messiah or of Elias.

S. John's baptism was symbolic of that needed purification which it could not bestow, but which Christian baptism was to convey.

S. John bases his teaching on the prophecy of Isaiah, "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together."²

The imagery of Isaiah is taken from the practice—both necessary and common in the East, where the roads are comparatively few and often very bad—of preparing for a royal progress or for the march of an army, by sending pioneers to mend the roads. And there is a Jewish legend, that in

¹S. John i. 25.

²Isaiah xl. 3-5.

the wanderings of the Israelites in the wilderness this work was done by the pillar of cloud and of fire, which brought low the mountains and filled the valleys, that the Israelites might pass over them in their journey.

As S. John had for his mission to prepare the way for the King of Righteousness, his work was necessarily that of removing moral obstacles such as we have already considered—the false conceptions in regard to the purpose for which Messiah was to come.

The result of S. John's preaching was to attract to himself a great multitude of the people, who afterwards, probably, formed the nucleus of the crowds which thronged around Christ as He preached in Galilee and in Jerusalem. The Baptist fearlessly characterizes the multitude who came to be baptized as a "generation of vipers," and exhorts them to bring forth, therefore, fruits of repentance. He warns them not to rely upon the privilege of their birthright as children of Abraham : for "That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham" ; much more can He raise up sons out of the obedient and faithful among the despised Gentiles.

It is well to observe that not only S. Matthew and S. Luke, in almost the same words, record this warning, but that in S. John¹ we find the Jews pleading this privilege with our Lord ; and that S. Paul in his Epistle to the Romans² makes it the basis of his argument for the justice of God.

III. The result of S. John's preaching was very wonderful ! It reached the consciences of his hearers, and they asked the convert's question, " What shall we do then ? "

Repentance is not only a change of mind, or the utterance of confession by the lips ; it leads to action, to amendment

¹ Cf. S. Matt. iii. 9 ; S. Luke iii. 8 ; and S. John viii. 33.

² Cf. chapters ii., iii., iv., ix., x., xi.

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of life. "What shall we *do*?" is the question asked by each group of S. John's hearers; and to each representative class the Baptist's counsel is, to be just, to do their duty in their various stations of life, their duty to God, and therefore to their fellow-man.

To the people generally S. John says, Do your duty to your neighbour; be kindly, charitable, unselfish, helpful. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." To the publicans, the most execrated of all classes among the Jews, his exhortation is, to be honest, since dishonesty was the special temptation of their business.

The word *τελώνης*, translated "publican," was the Greek title of the men who collected the Roman taxes or imposts. These taxes in themselves were most abhorrent to the Jew, reminding him, as they did, of his dependent position; but they were rendered still more hateful by the manner in which they were collected. They were leased out by the Romans to speculators of the Equestrian Order, who were, properly speaking, the "publicani." These men, however, employed a large staff to collect under them; and bribery, corruption, oppression and unfair dealing was the rule, rather than the exception, in a tax collector. Many of the lower offices in this department were filled by Jews; but the Jew who could so far forget his patriotism as to undertake such a work, merely because it was lucrative, was regarded by his fellow-men with feelings of intense scorn, and even hatred.

The occupation itself was most dangerous to a man's moral character, since it opened many avenues for oppression and dishonesty; but it is quite worth noticing that, dangerous as it was, and full of temptation, S. John did not require the tax gatherers to abandon it, only to be honest in it. He says, "Exact no more than that which is appointed you."

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The last class who are mentioned by S. Luke were soldiers; and we must bear in mind that the evangelist is only recording typical examples of different classes who came to the Baptist. To the soldiers he says, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages."

Here he touches on the three principal temptations of soldiers,—to be lawless in their violence, not only fighting under the authority of their leaders, but brawling among themselves, and often brutally cruel to those among whom they were quartered; then the temptation to bring false accusations against those whom they desired to oppress; and, lastly, a common practice of adding to their legal wages by looting from those who could not resist them. We cannot but be struck by the intensely practical character of S. John's advice to each of the different classes that came to him.

But this was not all. Not only did the Baptist preach repentance and amendment of life, and give practical advice to those who sought it, but he pointed to Christ; for "as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, whether he were the Christ, or not; John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."

Thus he points out the difference between his baptism and the baptism of Christ. His baptism was a confession of the need of purification; but the baptism of Christ, he told them, was to be a baptism of fire, which would indeed purify, as fire does, all things which it does not consume.

S. John Baptist is indeed the patron saint of Advent. His teaching is what the world needs in every age in

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preparation for the coming of Christ ; for we need repentance, amendment of life ; a willingness to receive Christ as our only Salvation, as our Lord and our King !

Sermon IX.

GOD'S CHRISTMAS GIFT.

(Christmas Day.) ✓

ISAIAH IX. 6.

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given.”



ONE of the thoughts which has occupied the minds of almost all of us of late has been, I do not doubt, what we should give to friends, and to those nearer than friends, as a Christmas gift, in token of our love and good will for them. There are few homes in the land too humble or too poor to be able to afford some Christmas gift, even though it be a very modest one, and there are few homes too great or too rich for such gifts to be welcome. To-day most of us have given and have received Christmas presents, and with some people who are not blessed with the knowledge and love of Jesus Christ, this is perhaps almost the only way in which Christmas is kept.

This custom of showing our love and good will by presents to one another on Christmas Day is altogether good and beautiful. It is good because it promotes mutual good will. It is beautiful on account of its origin and meaning, for it is intended to perpetuate the memory of the Great Gift which God gave to man on the first Christmas Day—the Gift of His own dear Son, the Manifestation of His wonderful love—“For God so loved the world, that He gave His

only-begotten Son.”¹ Stupendous Gift! His only-begotten Son—pledge of marvellous love!

Let us turn our thoughts this morning to the Gift that God gave on the first Christmas Day—to the gift that God gives to us each Christmas Day now, and to the gift which He asks of us in return.

I. And first—What did God give to man on the first Christmas Day?

The preparation of the world for the birth of Christ had been long and thorough. Man had learned his own weakness and misery and sin by years—nay, ages—of bitter experience. He had learned his own helplessness, for he had tried many remedies and all had failed. He had tried religion, but at the time of our Lord's first advent the religions of the old world had lost their hold on men's minds and hearts, and, though they had been of some help, faith in them was waning, and their power to aid and encourage man in the struggle of life had grown weak.

Judaism, the one revealed religion, had accomplished its work by developing in the Jewish nation a sense of personal sin, a realization of the Holiness of God, and a belief in the coming of the Messiah. But for the Jews of our Lord's day, Judaism had lost that living force by which once it had appealed to men's consciences—not through anything inherently weak in God's revelation, but on account of the worldliness and insincerity of those who then professed it.

Next to religion, men had sought help in philosophy, and the various schools of Greek Philosophy for some four hundred years had striven to deal with the problems of human life, and to point out to man the true law of conduct by which happiness might be obtained. But their promises had ended in disappointment. Man's misery and sin were

¹ S. John iii. 16.

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too deep-rooted and universal to be really alleviated by philosophy. While speculation on the mysteries of human life and conduct might afford a solace to the cultured few, it did not really touch the lives of the majority, and even those who for awhile studied the precepts and followed the teachings of some one or other of the various schools of philosophy for the most part only learned their barrenness.

If we turn from philosophy to morals, we find that the world was indeed dark and hopeless. The picture which S. Paul gives in the first chapter of Romans, of the moral condition of the heathen world, is indeed appalling, and some might think it exaggerated were it not amply substantiated by the contemporary witness of heathen writers such as Juvenal. Man felt his misery and realized his condition as perhaps never before, and we are told that at this time all the world looked for and longed for a deliverer, and "when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son."¹ How long the world had waited! How long God had delayed! While from the earth rose the cry, "Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke."² The mountains symbolized the uplifted hands of this great earth, uplifted in prayer; and at last the prayer is answered, and God bows the heavens, and touches the earth with the fire of divine love, when on Christmas Day, God, Who is Love, enters the world. God's gift to man that first Christmas Day was the gift of His dear Son, and with Him He gave that regenerating force of love which was slowly but surely to counteract the forces of evil which held the world in bondage, the force of love, which was surely, though slowly, to win to God the hearts of men and to show to the world the power of a Christ-like life in the saints of God.

¹ Gal. iv. 4.

² Psalm cxliv. 5.

Think of the joy of the first Christmas! Angels, shepherds, wise men, gathered around the Cradle at Bethlehem, the representatives of earth and heaven. The lowly and the exalted, the ignorant and the wise, the poor and the rich, alike rejoice in that first Christmas Gift.

II. But what does GOD give to us now? The same Gift, His dear Son; the same Power, divine love. "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given." This text is as true to-day as it was on the first Christmas Day. Then in visible form, shepherds and wise men adored; now, under the Sacramental veils we adore the same Babe of Bethlehem, the same Son of GOD. But our privilege is even greater than theirs, for while they beheld and adored, we are made partakers and possessors of that same Jesus Christ.

To those of us who this day made our Communion, GOD gave the same Christmas Gift, His dear Son; GOD entrusted to our care and love the Babe of Bethlehem. And what does He bring with Him? Peace, good will and love. The angels sang, "Glory to GOD in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The Christian world with all its faults and sins recognizes that Christmas is the season of love and good will. Our gifts to one another betoken this; and often men and women, who think little at other times of religious duty, do at Christmas make an effort to end feuds and misunderstandings, to forgive and to be forgiven, to keep Christmas in the spirit of love.

III. And what does GOD ask of us in return? What must be our Christmas gift to GOD?

1. We must give our love: for love begets love; and if GOD so loved us as to give His only-begotten Son, surely we must give our love in return. Then, too, a little child appeals with wonderful power to our love. How many touching stories there are of feuds healed, of love revived, by

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the coming of a little child into the lives of men and women ! And to-day Jesus Christ comes to us as a little child, asking for our love. Can we receive Him in the Holy Communion, and then turn from Him with coldness and neglect ? Shall we not rather strive to enthrone Him in our hearts, to let His love reign there ?

2. We must give our life : For He gave His life for us ; He lived for three and thirty years on earth, amid suffering and trial of every kind, to teach us how to live. And then He died upon the Cross to free us from the bondage of sin, and to give us power to live according to His example. Shall we not, then, strive to give our lives to His service ? If we do, we shall find in this, not only our highest duty, but our truest happiness ; for His service is perfect freedom, and the bonds which bind us to Him are the bonds only of love. He says to us, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me ; for I am meek and lowly in heart : and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light."¹

3. Then we must give our Lord : We not only come to the Holy Eucharist to feed upon the Body and Blood of Christ, but to offer to God the Father the Sacrifice of His dear Son. The sacred gifts in these Holy Mysteries are bestowed upon us, that we may have something to give back to God, something worthy of His acceptance ; and with this Eucharistic Sacrifice we offer and present ourselves, our souls, and bodies.

¹ S. Matt. xi. 28-30.

Sermon X.

THE SHEPHERDS OF BETHLEHEM. ✓

(Christmas Day.)

S. LUKE II. 8-10.

✓ "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And lo! the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them; and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them: Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people."

 O whom first did God make known the glad tidings of great joy that Christ was born? Not to the high priests and scribes and elders, not to the rich and powerful among the Jews, not to the Roman Emperor or to the Idumæan King, but to some "shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night."

Not only were the Jews expecting the Messiah to be born at Bethlehem in accordance with the prophecy of Micah, but there was a tradition¹ among them that He was to be revealed from Migdal Eder (the tower of the flock).

This Migdal Eder lay close to the little town of Bethlehem, on the road to Jerusalem, and there the flocks destined for the Temple sacrifices were pastured. These shepherds, then, were not ordinary shepherds, who, indeed, were regarded with contempt by the Rabbins because their manner of life rendered the strict observance of the law almost impossible, but shepherds who kept the Temple flocks of sheep, which were selected on account of their

¹ Jerusalem Targum I., Gen. xxxv. 21.

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freedom from all blemish, for sacrifice upon the Altar of the Temple.

I. If we confine ourselves to the first part of our text we may notice :—

1. First, the time when the glad tidings of great joy were brought to the shepherds. It was night—fit symbol of the condition of the world when our Lord was born. As we read in the first lesson for this morning's Service: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined."¹ There is a proverb that "Man's extremity is God's opportunity." When all seems darkest, God's light is often just about to dawn upon our lives. But there is a condition upon which this frequently depends.

2. That we should be watching. The shepherds were watching when the angel came with the Good News of Christ's birth. How often when life grows dark, and circumstances are adverse, we give up to despondency if not despair! and so perhaps defeat God's loving purpose for us. If only we had done our part, little though we could do—if only we had watched—we should have seen God's sign pointing out the path of safety. If only we had watched, we should have heard God's message of comfort and counsel to our soul. But because we gave up to hopelessness, the sign passed unheeded, the message fell on inattentive ears. How frequently in Holy Scripture we are exhorted to watch!—to watch, lest we fall into temptation; to watch, that we may stand fast in the Faith; to continue in prayer, and watch in the same; and in the Book of Revelations a special blessing is pronounced on him that watches.²

3. The shepherds were not only watching, but working.

¹ Isaiah ix. 2.

² Cf. S. Matt. xxvi. 41; 1 Cor. xvi. 13; Col. iv. 2; Rev. xvi. 15.

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And in selecting these shepherds as the first recipients of the heavenly message we are taught that God grants His divine favour to those who are conscientiously serving Him in their own proper sphere, however humble that may be

How often we find this illustrated both in Holy Scripture and in the experiences of our own lives. It was to the shepherds who were following their calling that the news of Christ's birth first came. It was to the Magi who were pursuing their vocation as astrologers that the news of Christ's birth was revealed by the star which they discovered in the heavens, and which led them to Bethlehem. It was to S. Peter and his companions, plying their trade as fishermen, that, through the miraculous draught of fishes, our Lord's power was made known, and S. Peter received the vocation to become a fisher of men. It was when S. Matthew was attending to his business as a publican or tax gatherer, that our Lord came to him, and said, "Follow Me."

In the experience, too, of our own daily life, we find it is not to the idle but to the diligent that God sends His messages. How often it is not the man of leisure, but the busy man, who has time and inclination for God's service. If we want to put ourselves in the attitude to receive God's revelation, we must not only watch but work, not only look to God for help, but try to help ourselves.

4. And lastly, we may notice the condition of the people to whom the message came. They were shepherds, poor people, for the days had long passed in Israel when the office of a shepherd was one of honour and wealth. So, too, in Christian life we find that it is far more often to the poor than to the rich that God shows His favours and reveals His Will. If then, we are poor, let us remember that poverty has its privileges and blessings as well as its hardships; and if we are rich, let us strive at least to be poor in spirit, to be

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humble, for "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble."¹

II. In the second part of the text we read that "the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them"; and that the angel brought them a message of great joy.

1. Here we notice, first, that the messenger was a heavenly one, was one of those bright spirits around God's Throne who do Him service, and are "sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation."² The angels in heaven are our elder brethren, who once had their trial and were proved faithful, and now they stand in God's presence and do His Will and minister to us who are struggling with evil on earth, still enduring our time of probation. They watch us; they pray for us; they rejoice at our repentance; they act as our guardians, and they bring to us God's messages. An angel was sent to the lowly shepherds in the plains of Bethlehem, to announce to them the birth of their Saviour!

2. Then, the message also was heavenly. Glad tidings of great joy—that Heaven's King was born on earth, had come to be our King; to rule, not like earthly kings, only over the bodies of His subjects, but to rule our hearts and minds!

Let us strive this Christmas to make Him Who was born King of the Jews, our King, to enthrone Him in our hearts, that He may rule our lives. So shall our days here be days of peace and happiness. And if we are His subjects on earth, we shall reign with Him in His Kingdom in Heaven, for He has said, "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."³

¹ 1S. James iv. 6.

² Heb. i. 14.

³ Rev. iii. 21.

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3. And lastly : The glory which shone around was a heavenly glory. It was not merely that such brightness streamed from the angel as properly belonged to an angelic being, but rather, that as God's representative he was accompanied by that glory which was the sign of God's presence, and which betokened His special manifestations to men. While the word "Shekinah" is not found in Holy Scripture itself, it was the word used in the Targums for the white, shining cloud of intolerable brightness which was the visible token of the presence of the Eternal God. Such was the flame of fire which accompanied the angel of the Lord who appeared to Moses in the burning bush.¹ Such was the pillar of fire which went before the Israelites by night in their wanderings in the wilderness,² and which was present in the Tabernacle and in the Temple.

In the New Testament this seems to be rendered sometimes by "tabernacle" (σκηνή), sometimes by "glory" (δόξα), and such a manifestation seems to be recorded here in connection with the appearance of the angel to the shepherds, and again at our Lord's Transfiguration, and at His appearance to Saul on the way to Damascus. There are also several places in the Epistles where the word "glory" evidently refers to something akin to the Jewish shekinah.³ With the Jews the shekinah was divine, but was not God; rather it was His Presence through some mediatorial instrument.

We are told that the shepherds were sore afraid when they recognized the glory of the Lord which shone around, but their fears were allayed by the angel's address : "Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy."

¹ Ex. iii. 2.

² Ex. xiii. 21.

³ Cf. Rom. vi. 4; ix. 4; Heb. i. 3; ix. 5; S. James ii. 1; 1 S. Peter iv. 14;

2 S. Peter i. 17.

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Let us carry away as our special lesson the thought that it was to those who, though in humble circumstances, were conscientiously doing their work that the first tidings of the Saviour's birth were brought. If we are working for God, however humble may be our sphere of usefulness, we may expect such revelations of God's Will and of God's love as may both teach us our work and guide us in the path of God's appointment.

Sermon XI.

THE GLORIES OF THE CHURCH.

(The First Sunday after Christmas.)

ISAIAH XXXV. I.

"The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose."

F all the chapters of the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah perhaps none surpasses this in its wealth of imagery and in the exquisite poetry of its diction. The two previous chapters were filled with the denunciation of God's judgments upon the enemies of the Church, and now there is a complete change; we pass as from the dark storms of winter to the peaceful joy of spring. With an exuberance of metaphor, which must appeal to every lover of nature, the prophet depicts the glories of Christ's Kingdom, both in its establishment on earth and in its consummation in heaven.

This chapter has been most fitly appointed as the lesson for the Sunday in the Octave of Christmas, because for us

the first fulfilment of the vision was at Christmas, in the birth and manifestation of Jesus Christ, as its complete and final fulfilment shall be after our Lord's second appearing with great glory to judge the world, when there shall be established a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

I. "The wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad for them; and the desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose." Here we may notice that "solitary place" might be more accurately rendered "parched land," and that "for them" is not in the Hebrew text. The condition of humanity at our Lord's birth might well be described under the image of a wilderness and parched land. It was indeed a desert in which nature brought forth chiefly thorns, thistles and weeds. But, though fittingly described as an arid desert, as parched land, it still had the potentiality which parched land has of absorbing streams of water, and then becoming extremely fertile.

We all know that the oases which travellers meet with in crossing the desert are caused by the presence of water in these places. So human nature before the Incarnation was like a thirsty land, dried up, parched, longing for refreshing streams of grace, and still possessing the possibilities of great fertility, if only it could obtain them.

Isaiah looks forward to the time when God shall visit His people with abundance of grace, and from that vision passes to another more glorious still in the far off future, and so portrays these two visions that they blend in one splendid picture. In his description of the glories of Christ's Kingdom the prophet draws his metaphors entirely from nature, and strikingly beautiful as they are to us, they must have appealed with even greater force to his fellow countrymen, who inhabited a land in which the transformation from

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winter to spring was far more sudden and more beautiful than in our more northern clime.

Travellers in the Holy Land in spring describe the plain of Sharon as a very garden, white with the narcissus, which (according to the Targum on Cant. ii. 1) is the flower here meant. The beauty of Sharon and Carmel was to be diffused over the whole land at the coming of the Messiah, and the flowers represent those Christian graces, themselves the fruit of God's grace in our souls, which were to be manifested in Christ's Kingdom on earth. The contrast between the springtime in the Holy Land, with its exuberant fertility, with its harvests of fruit and flowers, and the winter, with its coldness, and darkness, and storms, symbolizes very beautifully the difference between humanity made divine by incorporation into Christ, and producing the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—and humanity in its natural, or, rather, fallen condition, apart from Christ, not indeed forsaken by God, but without the endowments which belong to Christ's Kingdom.

II. In the third verse the prophet for a brief period breaks away from his metaphor of the springtime, in order that he may exhort those who are strong in the Church to succour their weaker brethren by sympathy and practical help, in the spirit of S. Paul's command, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ."¹ He says, "Strengthen ye the weak hands, and confirm the feeble knees. Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not; behold, your God will come with vengeance, even God with a recompense; He will come and save you."

We may notice that the prophet singles out the hands, the knees and the heart, as the parts of the body which need

¹ Gal. vi. 2.

strengthening. The hands symbolize the work a man does. The knees are put, perhaps, for the life he leads, as seen in his daily walk, and in the stand he takes in meeting the difficulties in his path; while the heart in Holy Scripture signifies the will as the centre of man's collective energies and the focus of his personal life, rather than the seat of his affections, which is represented by the bowels. This strengthening is to be effected by the proclamation; God "will come and save you."

Here, surely, we have one of the most striking of the Messianic prophecies, that God Himself shall come to save man, and that the result of His advent will be the strengthening of every part of man's nature. The proclamation is to be addressed to the will—"Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong,"—for the will is the centre of all human activity, and it is the faculty in which the effects of the Fall are most apparent. Sin has wounded every power of man's soul. Its effect upon the intellect is ignorance; upon the will, weakness; and upon the affections, perversion.

The coming of God through the Incarnation was to enlighten man's intellect, to strengthen man's will, and to purify his affections. Although the intellect became clouded by sin, it never lost its passion of curiosity, nor its craving for truth, but by the light of nature it was unable to attain to absolute truth.

God, however, had not left man without the means of knowing Him and of recognizing right and wrong. Natural religion and natural conscience among the Gentiles, and revealed religion and enlightened conscience with the Jews, enabled man to have a clear knowledge of God and of right and wrong; but man's will was too weak to do what God commanded, to follow what was right, and to refuse what he knew to be wrong.

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The difficulty with the Jew was not a lack of *knowledge*, but a lack of *will power* to do what he knew to be right, and this could only be remedied by God coming Himself in the flesh to impart to man supernatural strength, to give man grace by which his will might be strengthened, that he might not only *know* but *do* what was right.

By the Fall man's affections had become perverted; he did not lose his power of loving, but he loved unworthy objects; he loved the creatures rather than the Creator. By the Incarnation God came to give to man, as the supreme object of his love, nothing less than Himself; and from the first Christmas-day, an ever increasing number of God's saints in every age, have borne witness that they have found in the love of Jesus Christ that which satisfied their whole nature.

"Strengthen ye the weak hands." In Christ man finds a new revelation of work, that all work can be ennobled by being done for the glory of God. It matters not how humble work is, how small are its apparent results, if done in God's sight, in reliance upon His grace and for His glory, the most uninteresting task is of greater value, because its results will be more lasting, than the most splendid successes of mere worldly ambition.

"Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus,"¹ says S. Paul, for by doing things in the name of Jesus Christ, that is, in obedience to His command, in the power of His grace, and for love of Him, the commonest task is ennobled, and its results are made eternal. Our Lord said, "For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in My name . . . shall not lose his reward."²

There was a saint once who so realized this great truth—

¹ Col. iii. 17.

² S. Mark ix. 41.

that work is transformed and ennobled by being done in the name of Christ—that he made a resolution to try to begin every task with the words, “Propter Te Domine,” “For Thy sake, O Lord.”

If we were to follow his example, how different our work would be! for if we did it for Christ, we could not do it imperfectly; and if we did it for Him Who is the Supreme Object of our love, labour which is distasteful, or even burdensome, would be robbed of its bitterness—and more, would become of the deepest interest, since it would have a new motive, the motive of love. How S. Paul threw himself into his work, toilsome as it was, dangerous, often disappointing! The secret was, that he did it in the name of Jesus Christ; it was his Master’s work, for which he spent his time, and strength, and life; and he found in it, in spite of all its difficulties, a happiness which he could have found in no other work.

III. “Behold, your God will come . . . He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing.”

This passage gains new meaning when we recall that it was quoted by our Lord in proof of His Messiahship, for when S. John the Baptist from his gloomy prison sent his two disciples to ask of our Lord the question, “Art Thou He that should come, or look we for another?” Jesus said unto them, “Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard—how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the Gospel is preached.”¹ That is to say, our Lord pointed to His works as fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah, that when God should come, such miracles as these

¹ S. Luke vii. 22.

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should be seen. It was at once a proof of His Messiahship and of His Divinity.

“For in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert; and the parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water.” In this verse we have a further prophecy of the Day of Pentecost, when the water of God welled forth in streams of grace, enabling the apostles, like their Master, to work miracles of healing, and giving them power to convert and to conquer the world.

“And an highway shall be there, and a way, and it shall be called the way of holiness.” Our Lord again claims this as referring to Himself, for He says, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.”¹ He is that narrow way which leads to heaven; narrow, but safe; difficult, but glorious! As the prophet says, “The wayfaring men, though fools, shall not err therein.” That is, the simple and ignorant, when once they have found Christ, can tread in that narrow way as well as the learned and wise.

“The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” Here the vision of the Church on earth melts into the vision of the Church in heaven. Time is lost in eternity, for in this world it can never be said that sorrow and sighing shall flee away. It would not be good for us that they should flee away. But in the world to come we are told that “God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”²

¹ S. John xiv. 6.

² Rev. xxi. 4.

This glorious chapter ends thus with the triumph of the Church in eternity! Here we must bear our cross, but there we shall wear our crown. Here we must know sorrow, there our sorrow shall be turned into joy. Here we must go on our way weeping; but there, God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes. And this will be one of the joys of heaven: for to have no tears for God to wipe away will be to lose something of the joy of heaven, to have no sorrow to be turned into joy will be something wanting in heaven's happiness, to have no cross to be exchanged for the crown, will be something lacking of our eternal glory!

Sermon XII.

THE PRESENTATION. ✓

(The First Sunday after Christmas.)

S. LUKE II. 22-25.

"And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought Him to Jerusalem, to present Him to the Lord; (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons."



IN these words we are told of the fulfilment, by the Blessed Virgin Mary and her Divine Son, of a law instituted at the time of Israel's deliverance from Egypt, instituted with a twofold intent—first, to keep before Israel's consciousness both the fact of that wonderful deliverance and the means by which it had been effected—the death of the firstborn of the

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Egyptians, the preservation of the firstborn of Israel ; then further (a purpose veiled from the Jews), to typify an event of much wider significance—the deliverance through the death of the firstborn, the only-begotten Son of God, the Son of Mary, not only of Jewish children, but of all God's people.

I. We find the institution of the law in Exodus xiii. 2, in these words: "Sanctify unto Me all the firstborn, whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast ; it is Mine." This is repeated twice in the Book of Exodus (Ex. xxii. 29, 30 ; xxxiv. 19, 20), and is developed and applied in the Book of Numbers (Num. iii. 40-51 ; xvii. 15, 16).

In the first of these passages from the Book of Numbers, Moses is commanded to number all the firstborn of the males of the children of Israel. Their number was found to be twenty and two thousand two hundred and three score and thirteen. Now, by the law the firstborn of both man and beast was to be devoted to God ; in the case of a clean animal, by its death in sacrifice ; of an unclean animal through its redemption by the sacrifice of a lamb. In the case of the firstborn male child it was to be redeemed,—in what way we are not told in Exodus—probably by the substitution of a lamb, but later, after the setting apart of the Levites, as directed in Numbers iii., the firstborn child was to be redeemed by the payment of a sum of money in ransom. The life was saved by the substituted sacrifice, but the "saved life" still belonged to God, and was to be devoted to His service.

Since, however, there were obvious inconveniences in requiring that the head of each family, that is, the eldest son, should minister to God in the Tabernacle service, God commanded that one tribe, whose number almost corres-

ponded with the number of the firstborn of the Israelites, should take their place, and this is how the Levites came to be set apart to the service of God.

We read that "the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the Levites instead of all the firstborn among the children of Israel, and the cattle of the Levites instead of their cattle ; and the Levites shall be Mine : I am the Lord."¹ It would appear that the number of Levites was somewhat less than the number of the first-born. The excess, therefore, were to be redeemed at the rate of five shekels a head (about thirteen shillings), and this money was to be given unto Aaron and to his sons for the service of God. It was called the "redemption money."² And from that time forward this sum of money was paid for the ransom of each firstborn male child among the Jews.

Such was the law which was fulfilled in our Lord's case by His presentation in the temple. Its purpose was to bring home to the Jew the great truth, that not only did the first fruits of his flocks and herds and of his fields belong to God, but, still more, his firstborn son ; that out of each family God claimed the eldest, and, therefore, in the Jewish estimation, the best, the head of the family, for Himself.

Thus we see that the rite of the presentation of the firstborn in the temple was no mere empty ceremony, but to the Jew was full of significance. It reminded him of God's wonderful deliverance of his nation from the Egyptians.

It also reminded him that God claimed one from each family, where there was a son, for His service, and that though that claim was, as it were, commuted by the substitution of the Levites, yet the ceremony of bringing the first-born to the temple and redeeming him by sacrifice—giving him to God's priest to be offered to God, and then receiving

¹ Num. iii. 44, 45.

² Cf. vv. 46-51.

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him back again to be brought up in God's service—brought that claim vividly home to Jewish parents.

Then, again, *we* are able to see, what was hidden from the Jews, that the whole of this action pointed to our Lord's work of redemption, that it was a type both of the deliverance of man from the bondage of sin, typified by the Egyptian captivity, and of the method by which this deliverance was to be effected—the death of the firstborn—for the firstborn of Mary was the only-begotten Son of God, Whom God gave, “that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life”;¹ and by His death we are saved.

II. But what a lesson for Christian parents we have here ! Not only the eldest son, but every child of Christian parents, belongs to God. Under the old covenant the eldest son was the priest of the household; under the new covenant of Christianity we are all sharers in the priesthood, for, as S. Peter tells us, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people”; and again, “Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.”² S. Peter addressed these words not to those in Holy Orders only, but to the whole Christian Church, and thus reminded each member of his great privilege, and therefore great responsibility, for taking his part in the offering of sacrifices acceptable to God.

The eldest son of a Jew might fulfil his service by a substitute, by a Levite. But it is not so with the Christian. While we are not all called to the higher ministries of the Church, we are all called to share in its priesthood, so far as joining in the offering of the one great Sacrifice by which God is most honoured and man is most blessed, the offering

¹ S. John iii. 16.

² 1 S. Peter ii. 9, 5.

of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. In this Holy Sacrifice the priest does not merely offer *instead* of the people; he is the organ of the mystical Body of Christ, but the whole body, with all its members, shares in the work which he is doing.

The fact that God claims the service, not only of the eldest son, but of every Christian child, is clearly recognized and set forth in the Sacrament of Holy Baptism. Therein the child is made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven. He is regenerated and receives certain precious endowments of grace. But this is not all; baptism does not only convey grace, it involves responsibility; and this aspect is very clearly recognized in the Baptismal Service itself. For, first, immediately after the act of baptism, the priest signs the child with the sign of the Cross, "in token that hereafter he shall not be ashamed to confess the faith of Christ crucified, and manfully to fight under His banner, against sin, the world, and the devil; and to continue Christ's faithful soldier and servant unto his life's end." Here we see that the dedication of the child to God in baptism makes him God's soldier and God's servant, and that in both these characters he must be faithful unto his life's end.

But again, if this is the obligation of the person baptized, our service clearly recognizes a further obligation on the part of his god-parents, and, *a fortiori*, on the part of his parents, "to see that this infant be taught, so soon as he shall be able to learn, what a solemn vow, promise, and profession, he hath here made" by them. For this purpose it is their duty to see that he is instructed, and chiefly to "provide that he may learn the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, in the vulgar tongue,

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and all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health."

Nothing can be stronger than this expression of the obligation of parents and god-parents to bring up children not merely with the knowledge of the Creed, the Lord's Prayer and the Ten Commandments, but of all other things which a Christian ought to know and believe to his soul's health.

There is a theory—by no means uncommon—that a child should be brought up without religion, and left to choose his own religion when he is old enough to decide for himself. It would be just as reasonable to say that a child should be brought up without education until he is old enough to decide what sort of education he prefers. Such a bringing up we know would handicap the child frightfully throughout his life. If he is to have no education until he is perhaps fourteen or fifteen years of age, in most cases, even if he had the inclination, he would never be able to make up for lost time and opportunities, and in some cases he would have destroyed the desire for learning by having blunted that passion of curiosity which in the young is the great stimulus for knowledge.

However, no one argues that a child should be brought up without education, and yet education implies the imparting of a bias to the child's thought and character, a bias which will influence his whole life. So, in the same way, the bringing up of a child without religion does much to dwarf the religious faculty. And if it is not wrong to bias a child's future life by education of a kind which we think, rightly or wrongly, is the best, it surely is not wrong to bias his moral character by the religious education which in baptism sponsors and parents promised in the sight of God that they would give that child.

It is a solemn thought for every parent: "My child belongs to God. God claims him as His own. He was redeemed by the death of the Firstborn, Jesus Christ. In baptism I dedicated him to God. He was offered to God, and then given back to me, that I might bring him up as a Christian should be brought up, to fulfil his duties as Christ's faithful soldier and servant. If I am neglecting this obligation, I am doing my child the greatest injury which it is possible for me to do him. Not only shall I have to answer before God for my neglect of this solemn duty, but I may be the means of ruining my child's soul for time and eternity! Not only shall I be punished, but he may be involved and punished through my fault."

What then, is the lesson brought home to us by our Lord's presentation in the Temple? Surely the lesson that our children belong to God, and that it is our highest privilege, as well as our most solemn responsibility, to train those children in the knowledge and love of God, to teach them from the very beginning that they belong to God, and why they belong to God, that God loves them, to teach them that God has revealed a code of conduct in the Sermon on the Mount, has left them an example in the life of Jesus Christ, has given them a Teacher in His Holy Church, and supplies them with grace in the Sacraments.

Then again, when they are old enough, they should be taught what the firstborn among the Jews was taught—their priestly obligation, to be fulfilled in the part they take in the worship of God; they should be taught that it is not enough for people to say their prayers and read their Bibles at home, for as members of a great society, the Body of Christ, there rests upon them the obligation of public worship, which in its highest act is the offering of the one Service which Jesus Christ Himself ordained—the Holy Eucharist—the

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offering of the Memorial of His death upon the Cross, the pleading of the one Sacrifice once offered, the Sacrifice from which flows all grace and blessing.

If parents were to bring up their children with the knowledge of the Church and its teachings, with some experience of its worship, we should not find that in their youth or early manhood they so often went astray, we should not so often hear of a mother's heart being broken by her son's dissipation and sin. And even if, yielding to temptation, her child should fall into grievous sin, he would know the way back to Christ, to the Refuge for sinners, to the Fountain opened to cleanse us from all sin.

The day will come when mother and child must stand before the Judgment Seat of Christ. What happiness for the mother's heart then, if the child whom she dedicated to GOD at the font is found to be His for eternity! What horror, if through her foolish indulgence or her neglect of a solemn duty, that child should have been so brought up in habits of wilfulness and irreligion, that his soul is lost!

Mary brought her Child to the Temple to present Him to GOD, and then took Him back again to the humble home at Nazareth, where she watched over His infancy and youth, and rejoiced as she saw Him daily growing in wisdom and stature, and in favour with GOD and man.

Sermon XIII.

GOD'S COVENANT WITH MAN. ✓

(The Feast of the Circumcision.)

GENESIS XVII. 1, 2.

“And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the Lord appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty GOD; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee, and will multiply thee exceedingly.”

N the first lesson for this morning's service we have not only an account of the institution of Circumcision, but a full description of the circumstances under which the rite was established.

And we find that it was the outward sign of a covenant between GOD and His chosen people, the seed of Abraham; an outward sign, which, as S. Paul tells us in the second lesson, profiteth indeed if the covenant, of which it is a sign, be kept, but which is rather to a man's condemnation than to his advantage if that covenant be ignored.

I. In the early history of Abram, contained in Genesis xii. to xviii., we find GOD renewing, no less than three times, a covenant which He made with Abram, and each time adding something more in the way of promise to the covenant. In the twelfth chapter we read that after the death of his father Terah, the Lord said unto Abram, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: . . .

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and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."¹

Here we have the call of Abram (to leave his own country, and to trust himself to God's guidance in seeking a new home in a foreign land) coupled with the covenant into which God enters with him—that He would make of him a great nation, that He would make his name great, and that in him all the families of the earth should be blessed. We know how perfectly God fulfilled this promise.

This, then, was the moment when God first entered into covenant with Abram. In the next chapter we read that after Lot had separated from Abram, the Lord said unto him, "Lift up now thine eyes, and look from the place where thou art northward, and southward, and eastward, and westward. For all the land which thou seest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed for ever. And I will make thy seed as the dust of the earth."² Here the covenant with Abram is renewed, and there is added to it the definite promise that he should inherit and possess the land of Canaan.

Again, two chapters further on, we find that "the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me Thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and He said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And

¹ Gen. xii. 1-3.

² Gen. xiii. 14-16.

he believed in the Lord; and He counted it to him for righteousness.”¹

Here, for the third time, the covenant is renewed, with the further promise to Abram of an heir, and with the prophecy “that thy seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs, and shall serve them, and they shall afflict them four hundred years . . . but in the fourth generation they shall come hither again.”²

Thus we see that in each renewal of the covenant there is a further revelation of God's loving purpose. Finally, in the seventeenth chapter, we have the last renewal of the covenant, a new revelation attached to it, and the announcement of the approaching fulfilment of the promise that Abram should have an heir.

If we examine these interesting chapters carefully, we shall find that twenty-four years elapsed between the first covenant and its final renewal, and that, as Ishmael was thirteen years old when the rite of Circumcision was instituted, that period had passed after Abram took, at Sarai's suggestion, her servant Hagar as his concubine. It would seem, therefore, that while Abram believed God's promise—for we are distinctly told Abram “believed in the Lord, and He counted it to him for righteousness”³—yet, after waiting some ten years, his trust in God became so far imperfect that he tried to bring about by unworthy means the great end which God promised. And many ancient commentators point out that this was probably the cause of the further delay of fourteen years on God's part.

God promised that through Abram all nations of the earth should be blessed, and this promise involved the gift of a son to Abram. After waiting for ten years, during which the promise was amplified, and he was assured that his own

¹ Gen. xv. 1-7.

² Gen. xv. 13, 16.

³ Gen. xv. 6.

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child, not merely one born in his own house, should be his heir, Abram allows himself to be persuaded—perhaps not unwillingly—by Sarai his wife, so far to distrust God's promise as to take means to accomplish it himself in a way which only brought upon him distress.

How great is the temptation, sometimes even with good people, to persuade themselves that the end justifies the means—that to accomplish some great good, it is not wrong to do a little evil! We see this exemplified again in the history of Jacob, who was promised the birthright by God, which birthright seems to have been associated with his father's special blessing. But Jacob, like Abram, is not content to wait God's time; he becomes impatient, and fearing lest his father should give the blessing and the birthright to Esau, at his mother's suggestion practises that grievous deceit upon his aged father, by which, indeed, he obtains his blessing, but is obliged to leave his home and country, and spend twenty years in exile!

God puts the mark of His displeasure upon such want of trust in Abram's case, by delaying over thirteen years the birth of Isaac; and in Jacob's case, by twenty years' exile, and a life of penance. Surely, we may learn from this, that the end does not justify the means, and that we must trust God to bring about His promises in His own good time, and by His own good Providence.

II. But if we turn back to the circumstances under which the covenant was finally renewed, we shall observe that it was accompanied by a special revelation of the purpose, conditions and sign of that covenant.

1. Its purpose was man's perfection, for God said to Abram, "I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect. And I will make My covenant between Me and thee." All God's dealings with man have this end in

view—man's ultimate perfection. Adam was created in a state of perfection, and the condition of his retaining that perfection, and fulfilling all God's purpose for him, was obedience. He sinned by disobedience; and while by Adam's sin human nature did not become, as some have thought, absolutely depraved, it lost its integrity, that is, its wholeness, its balance and perfection; and it also lost that sanctifying grace which enabled man to do always what was pleasing to God.

From the Fall, all God's work for man has been restorative, has had in view the gradual restoration to man, not of his preternatural gift of integrity, but—first by the law, and then by grace—of such divine help as should enable him to resist the promptings of evil in his nature, and again to become pleasing to God. This is man's perfection—to fulfil God's purpose for him, to accomplish the end for which he was created. So in this final renewal of God's covenant with man through Abram, God reveals that the purpose of the covenant is that man should become perfect.

2. The condition of the attainment of this perfection on man's part depends upon a life of faith, which is described as "walking before God." By "faith" we mean not merely intellectual assent to the revelation of God, but such moral consequences in the life of man, flowing from this assent, as shall enable man to trust in God, for faith in God implies such trust. It was here that Abram's faith was imperfect; and therefore for him the injunction, "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect," would have special significance.

Not only does God reveal that a life of faith, "a walking before Him," is the condition of attaining perfection, but He shows that this perfection in man is a necessary con-

sequence of the Creator's attribute of Omnipotence. The revelation is introduced by the clause, "I am the Almighty God" (El Shaddai). God reveals Himself under this name, thus characterizing Jehovah, the covenant God, "as possessing the power to realize His promises, even when the order of nature presented no prospect of their fulfilment, and the powers of nature were insufficient to secure it." The age of Abram and of Sarai left no human hope of a child being born to them, and their mere natural powers at that time of life were insufficient to accomplish God's purpose apart from His own special interposition.

Thus the realization of God's Omnipotence—a consideration of what God is—becomes of much help and encouragement in those periods of difficulty and darkness which fall to the lot of all Christians. There are occasions when we pray for strength to accomplish some work which needs to be done, or for grace to bear some trial from which there seems no escape, or to meet some grievous temptation which threatens the ruin of our soul. At such times it is of immense help to meditate upon the name of God—"El Shaddai," the Almighty, He Who is able to help to the uttermost, and Who, if He delays to send the succour for which we ask, delays either because our trust is imperfect and we need the discipline of waiting, or to test and to reward our faith.

3. The sign of Circumcision was given as the outward sign of God's covenant with man through Abraham, a sign which was to remind the Jew of the glorious promises, of the magnificent privileges, and of the great responsibilities which he inherited from Abraham. But the sign, unlike the Christian Sacraments, did not *convey* the power or grace to fulfil those responsibilities.

As S. Paul shows, Circumcision was an advantage if the Jew lived up to the covenant which it implied. It was not

only of no advantage, but to his condemnation, if, while boasting in the privileges of Judaism, he neglected its responsibilities.

The corresponding Sacrament in the Christian Church—Baptism—is not only a sign of our covenant with God, but a means of grace whereby we are made members of Christ, children of God, inheritors of heaven, whereby we have given to us remission of sin and the grace of regeneration, together with many other gifts. Yet we must remember that baptism is not a charm, that grace needs the co-operation of our own wills, needs to be used, and that our baptismal covenant, if we do not live up to its privileges, will be our grievous condemnation.

III. This brings us to the special thought which I would have you carry away to-day—the need of renewing and confirming from time to time our covenant with God. I do not mean, of course, that our non-renewal in any sense renders us less bound to God's service, but that it is a helpful thing, and clearly has the sanction of Holy Scripture, for us from time to time to remind ourselves of our baptismal promises, to renew them, and to seek God's grace, that we may fulfil them more perfectly.

The Feast of the Circumcision is the world's New Year's Day, a day when many persons make good resolutions for the New Year. The Church claims the world's New Year by making it the Feast of the Circumcision, writes over its porch the name of "Jesus," and sprinkles it with His Precious Blood; for our Lord's first blood-shedding was at His Circumcision, when the name of "Jesus" was bestowed upon Him.

We have been studying the circumstances under which the rite of Circumcision was instituted, and we have found that it was connected with the renewal of a covenant, a

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renewal which had taken place more than once. Surely, then, we have good authority for renewing our covenant with God to-day, making our resolution that by His help—for without that help we can do nothing—we will serve Him more faithfully during this New Year.

We have observed that in Abraham's case the renewal of the covenant was always accompanied by some new revelation, or some further promise on God's part, and we may be certain that this will be so with us. Every time we make a new start, every time we dedicate ourselves anew to God, God will give us a new gift of grace, a clearer revelation of Himself, of His purposes for us, and of His gracious promises.

All God's dealings with us, as we have seen, have for their end our improvement, our perfection. If we will but open our hearts to His love, yield our wills to His grace, this year—whose threshold to-day we pass—may be the best year of our lives, a year full of grace and blessing, and therefore of happiness, a year in which we lay by treasure for Eternity! God grant that it may be so with some of us.

Sermon XIV.

OUR RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHRISTIAN PRIVILEGES.

(The Feast of the Circumcision.) ✓

ROMANS II. 28, 29.

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that Circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of GOD."

IN selecting the second lesson, the Church seems to desire to set before us, as her teaching to-day, the privileges and responsibilities of our inheritance as Churchmen, and especially the true value of sacramental ordinances.

I. At the beginning of the lesson S. Paul records the privileges of the Jew, which were undeniably great. His very name, derived from "Judah," signified "praise." He possessed a written law as the charter of his salvation, and on this he professed to rest. He claimed Jehovah as peculiarly his God, in contradistinction to the gods of the heathen world. He boasted of his knowledge of God's Will revealed to him in the Holy Scripture. He listened to it with reverence as it was read every Sabbath Day in the synagogues. He considered himself the only guide to the poor, blind Gentile, the only light in this dark world. He regarded those whom he felt it was his mission to instruct as foolish and babes in comparison with the wisdom and maturity to which, as a Jew, he had attained.

And these privileges which he claimed were not empty

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pretensions; every one of them could be substantiated by an appeal to God's revelation. But S. Paul goes on to place in striking contrast to these glorious privileges the practical daily life of the Jew, which gave the lie to his pretensions, which was in flat contradiction to his own teachings; for S. Paul asks of his countrymen how far their practice corresponds with their theory; and proceeds to show that the very sins which they condemn in the Gentiles they commit themselves; so that the name of God, Jehovah, the God of the Jew, is dishonoured, and His religion is discredited.

He then, in the 25th verse, takes up that sacramental rite by which the Jew entered into covenant with Jehovah, and upon which he rested his claims to salvation—the rite of Circumcision. This seal of God's covenant was regarded by the Jew as in itself constituting an almost certain claim to heaven; for he taught, practically, that, because of his Circumcision, no Jew could be lost; and some even represented the angel of God as waiting at the jaws of hell to remove this mark from the Jew before he could enter there.

S. Paul, however, sums up these privileges by applying to them the indisputable principle, that privileges imply corresponding responsibilities; so that a man, be he Jew or Christian, who does not fulfil his responsibilities, cannot claim his privileges. This is what he means when he says, in the words of my text, "He is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that Circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God."

These last words, with which both the argument and the chapter conclude, are a play upon the first words, "Behold, thou art called a Jew"; for "Jew" signified "praise"; but

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S. Paul teaches that the only *praise* which is of any value is the praise, not of men, but of God, and this praise depends not on mere conformity to an external ordinance, but on producing the fruits of a spiritual life.

Hence, S. Paul denies that he is a Jew who is only one outwardly, that is, one who claims his privilege simply because he happens to be, by natural birth, a descendant of Abraham, and to have received the external sign of Circumcision. The privileges which belong to Jewish birth and to Circumcision bring with them responsibilities; and unless they are fulfilled, the claim which the Jew makes is worthless.

“He is a Jew,” says S. Paul, “which is one inwardly; and Circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter.” That is to say, he is a child of Abraham, who manifests Abraham’s faith, and who, having received the external sign of Circumcision, strives to fulfil the covenant with God, into which he thus enters by obeying the precepts of His law.

II. All this is as true of us as it was in S. Paul’s time of the Jews; and this first day of the new year is a very good opportunity for considering it. As Churchmen, we claim certain privileges. We have hereditary advantages which are undeniable. We have been born in a Christian country; we have been brought up in a Christian family; by baptism we have been made members of Christ’s Church. Others are born in less favourable circumstances than ourselves, both in religion and in worldly state. But S. Paul reminds us that all these privileges bring with them corresponding duties, involve responsibilities, and that we cannot claim the privilege unless we are willing to accept the responsibility and to fulfil the duty; indeed, that unless we do so we are worse off than those who have no such privileges.

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It seems to us almost inconceivable that the Jews could have rested their claim upon God simply on the fact that they were born Jews and had been circumcised. And yet, while we, perhaps, do not realize this, is it not very much like what many of us are doing? Because we are born Christians, because by the circumstances of our birth and education we have been brought up in the Church, we have been baptized and confirmed, and have become communicants, is there not a danger of our thinking that, therefore, we must also be saved?

I do not mean that we should care, or even venture, to put forth such a claim in actual words; but down in our hearts is there not the conviction that, somehow, we are not really likely to be lost? We know that we are not as earnest as we should be; we hope some day to serve God better; but do we really face the fact that we have incurred far more responsibilities than those around us, upon whom we look almost with pitying contempt, because they have not our religious privileges, or our religious knowledge. Do we realize that if we are not living up to what we know is our Christian duty, our very privileges, our very heritage, will be our condemnation?

In this light we might paraphrase S. Paul's words somewhat as follows: "He is not a Churchman, who is one outwardly; and the mere mechanical reception of sacraments is only his condemnation." Religion is, first, a matter of heart and spirit; its outward expression is but the trappings of a corpse, if its inner life be wanting.

III. We may apply this in two ways, and first to the Sacraments of the Church. It would be impossible to exaggerate the sanctity or importance of the Sacraments which Christ has instituted in His Church. They are means of grace, some of which are generally necessary to

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salvation, that is to say, necessary to all who can obtain them. Such are the Sacraments of Baptism and the Holy Eucharist. But they are *means*, not *ends*; and there are many, who, like the Jews, come practically to regard the Sacraments as *ends* in themselves.

The Christian Sacraments are not, like Circumcision, a mere sign of a covenant with God; for they not only symbolize but convey grace; and yet they are not, as we have said, *ends* in themselves.

Baptism is a *means* by which we are born anew and incorporated into Christ. But even this is not the *end*; the end is, that being incorporated into Christ, Christ may live in us. The Holy Eucharist is the Body and Blood of Christ; but we receive it as a means of feeding the Christ-life in our souls, of helping us to attain to a closer fellowship with Him.

Sacraments are not charms; and though each infallibly conveys its proper grace, our power to appropriate that grace depends on our approaching each with right dispositions. To think that, because we have been baptized and are regular communicants, we therefore must be saved, is to fall into the error of the Jews that S. Paul was combating—the error of supposing that, because they were circumcised and were children of Abraham, therefore they must be accepted of God.

Baptism will only be our condemnation unless we live as children of God, fulfilling our baptismal obligations, and using the grace therein bestowed upon us. The Holy Communion will indeed fill us with spiritual strength if we approach with right dispositions and strive to use the grace which it conveys to us; but otherwise, the mere mechanical reception of the Holy Sacrament only increases our guilt.

Again, we may apply this principle to our conduct as

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Christians and as Catholic Churchmen. We, indeed, inherit glorious privileges, which have descended to us from our forefathers; but those privileges carry with them corresponding obligations; that having light, we should live as children of the Light; that being churchmen, we should bring no discredit, by our life, upon the teachings of our Holy Mother, the Church.

This New Year's Day will be a good time to examine ourselves on these points, and by God's help to make an earnest resolution so to conform our inner life and outward conduct to our religious profession and privilege, that we may glorify God in our daily lives, and continually progress in real holiness.

Sermon XV.

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD.

(The Second Sunday after Christmas.)

ISAIAH XLII. 1-5.

"Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench; he shall bring forth judgment unto truth. He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth; and the isles shall wait for his law."



THE Book of Isaiah falls into two very distinct portions, the first thirty-nine chapters forming the one, and the last twenty-seven the other; and the second division is distinguished by its wonderful picture of the servant of the Lord. The prophet

begins with an outline which is at first somewhat indistinct, but is gradually filled in, till we recognize, portrayed with startling accuracy, the lineaments, the features, the character of Christ, the Saviour of the world; for we read in the prophecy His birth, His life, His passion, His death, and His resurrection.

The second division of the Book of Isaiah begins with chapter xl., and in this and the next chapter we have set forth the great fundamental dogma of the Unity and Sovereignty of God, that Jehovah is One, and that Jehovah is King. This great truth is first proclaimed to God's people Israel in chapter xl., and then to the nations around in chapter xli., these are spoken of—as so often in Isaiah—as the people of the isles. From this fundamental truth Isaiah passes on to declare God's Will and purpose for man; first for Israel, then for all mankind. And this purpose may be summed up in the word "Service." Indeed, as has been well said, Jehovah and Jehovah's servant are the two heroes of this great drama.

I. One of the questions which clamour for an answer in the mind of every thinking man, is the supreme question, "Why was I made? What is the purpose of my life? and what is the true end of my being?" If man is to find happiness in the fulfilment of the true law of his nature, he must know what that law is. And so a thinking man, looking out upon human life, with all its strange vicissitudes, will ask himself again and again, "Why was man made? What is God's purpose for man in this world?" And *one* answer is, "Service." Man was made to serve God, and, in serving God, to serve his fellow-man. And in the fulfilment of this duty man finds his greatest utility and his highest happiness.

We must, however, recognize that there is, on the other

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side of the question, a strange craving in man for independence, a rooted aversion to the idea of service. Man, next to the law of self-preservation, recognizes as his inalienable right, and his true happiness, the law of liberty. But, alas! man too often deceives himself in regard to liberty—mistaking for liberty, independence, or sometimes worse, license. For while man is meant to be free, he is not meant to be independent, indeed this he never can be. He cannot be independent of God, though he may strive to throw off God's yoke. He depends on God not only for the gift of life, in the first place, but for its conservation and sustentation. And then, too, man is not and cannot be independent of his fellow-man; for man is a social being, bound up in the great network of social life, and he can only realize his freedom by recognizing his dependence and fulfilling his obligation of service to God and his fellow-man. This, too, we may learn by a careful study of the prophecy of Isaiah.

But when we ask precisely who is meant by the servant of the Lord, or servant of Jehovah, we cannot answer the question by any one name, for it is evident that in some places in Isaiah by the "servant of Jehovah" is meant God's people Israel; while in other places the phrase clearly denotes only the Messiah. Why is this? If we may reverently attempt to answer, we should say that it was God's purpose for the redemption of mankind, first, to choose out and to train one nation who should be, in a sense, the servant of all mankind, and through whose service all mankind should be blessed.

We see God electing and calling from the rest of the world Abraham, watching over and training his descendants, disciplining and preparing them for their great work by the captivity in Egypt, by the wanderings in the wilderness, and by the special revelation given to them there through Moses. This work of preparation is carried on by the con-

quest of Canaan, by the various vicissitudes of their checkered history, extending from the time of Joshua to the coming of Christ; by the captivity in Babylon; by the effort to build up again the ruins of Jerusalem; by the struggles under the Maccabees; and it culminates finally in the fulfilment of promise and prophecy at the birth of Jesus Christ. Through all this long period, through all this varied training, Israel was being prepared as God's servant to do its part in the redemption of the world.

Speaking of the Christian Church, our Lord said, "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened."¹ It was to be the leaven of the world. And precisely the same is true of the older Church of the Jews. They were the leaven working in the world before Christ came, and in this fulfilling their office as the servant of Jehovah. This is clear from such passages in the prophets as, "Thou, Israel, art My servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham My friend."² Indeed, the two great dogmas of the Old Testament are Jehovah's Unity and Sovereignty, and Israel's election for service.

II. Another great line of thought which runs through the books of the prophets is that the greater part of Israel was unfaithful to God's service, but that a remnant was always left, and from this remnant came the Messiah. It produced Mary, the flower and crown of humanity, who, when God's purpose of the Incarnation waited upon the decision of a human will, was able to say without hesitation, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word."³ And from Mary, Jesus was born. The Virgin

¹ S. Matt. xiii. 33.

² Isaiah xli. 8; cf. also Jer. xxx. 10; xlv. 27; Ezek. xxviii. 25; xxxvii. 25.

³ S. Luke i. 38.

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conceived and bare a Son, Emmanuel, God with us. Moreover in the Person of Christ was summed up and perfectly fulfilled that free and loving service of God and of man, to which Israel, God's ancient people, had been elected and called. They had failed, or, rather, they had fulfilled only partially the law of God's service; but from them had sprung the Messiah, of Whom Isaiah prophesies in the text that "He shall not fail."

Thus we find that in the visions of Isaiah sometimes he describes, under the title of the "servant of Jehovah," "God's people Israel"; while at others, looking into the far future, he sees Israel personified in their Messiah, the nation passes into the Person, and the service which they fulfilled but partially he beholds perfectly rendered by the true Servant of the Lord, Whose birth, and life, and passion, and death, and resurrection, he so wonderfully describes.

In the opening words of this chapter Isaiah passes from the historical nation descended from Abraham to the great Son of David, Christ, in Whom the Jewish nation is summed up, and through Whom, as promised to Abraham, all nations are blessed. Henceforth, while reverting from time to time to the historical nation as the Servant of Jehovah, Isaiah goes on to depict with ever increasing clearness the Person and Character of the Messiah as the Servant of Jehovah. We have not time to trace this in detail, but we may notice in regard to the passage chosen for our text, that none but Christ fulfils Isaiah's description, and that He fulfils it perfectly.

"Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth; I have put My Spirit upon him." We may compare these words with the account of our Lord's baptism, when the Voice from heaven proclaimed,

"This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased,"¹ and the Spirit of God descended upon Him like a dove. "My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased," corresponds with "My servant, Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth"; while "I have put My Spirit upon him" is fulfilled by the descent of the Holy Ghost.

In the next verses Isaiah describes the characteristics of our Lord's ministry, "He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street." Our Lord's ministry was gentle, quiet, in no sense sensational, noisy or ostentatious. Again, "A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench." What can be weaker than a bruised reed? what more easily broken? But it was the characteristic of Christ's ministry to be gentle with the weak, to put upon them no burden which was too great for them. And then the simile of the smoking flax is, of course, taken from the wick of a lamp, which used to be made of flax, from the expiring flame of the lamp, just ready to go out for lack of oil, the wick smouldering and easily extinguished. Christ came to supply the oil of grace, that the flame might burn brightly—He did not come to extinguish it.

This was true, first, of the Gentiles, who lay in darkness, and yet had some light still left. It is true now of individual souls, for Christ comes to each, to bind up and support the bruised; and to those whose lamp is going out He comes to help them to cleanse the wick by penitence, and to supply the lamp with the oil of grace.

In verses 6 and 7 we are told that the Servant of Jehovah shall be given "for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house."

¹S. Matt. iii. 17.

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The description of the Servant of Jehovah culminates in chapter lii. 13, to the end of the fifty-third chapter, where His Passion is so marvellously described. "He is despised and rejected of men; a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. . . . He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. . . . He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment. . . . He was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of My people was He stricken. And He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth."

It is not necessary to continue this chapter. This is surely sufficient to show how Isaiah's conception of the Servant of the Lord is finally summed up and consummated in the Person of Christ. And we find the fullest and clearest recognition of this in the New Testament, for when S. John the Baptist said of Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world,"¹ he was simply applying to our Lord the prophecy in the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.

S. Matthew, too, quotes the very passage of our text as fulfilled by Jesus Christ, "Behold My Servant, Whom I have chosen; My Beloved, in Whom My soul is well pleased: I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles,"² etc.; and S. Luke records that our Lord said of Himself, "I am among you as He that serveth"³; while S. John, who gives so full a

¹S. John i. 29.

²S. Matt. xii. 18.

³S. Luke xxii. 27.

description of our Lord's great act of service in washing His disciples' feet, adds, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you."¹

III. This brings us to the application of Isaiah's prophecy to ourselves. If our Lord summed up in His own Person and Life that service to which God had elected His people, the Jews, He leaves to us the injunction to carry out more perfectly what they so lamentably failed in—the work of service towards God and man. We are to follow in His steps—in all things—not only in suffering, but in service, for He reveals to us both by word and example the dignity of service, that it is the purpose for which man was created, and that in its fulfilment man attains to his noblest end in this life.

He shows us that this service is not incompatible with the truest freedom; and S. Paul—who loved to call himself the bond-slave of Jesus Christ, and whose whole life was devoted to the service of his Master and of his fellow-men—exhorts us to "Stand fast therefore in the *liberty* wherewith Christ hath made us free."² Indeed, the service of Christ is the only possible freedom! for, as we have noticed, man cannot be independent; he must either be the servant of the Lord, and, for the Lord's sake, the servant of his fellow-men, fulfilling the apostolic injunction, "Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,"³ or he must be the slave of the world, or the flesh, or the devil!

To be the servant of the Lord, is to be free from slavery to the world and its opinions, free from the social slavery under which so many live. It is to be free from slavery to animal passions, the sensual slavery which is the hard lot of those who mistake license for liberty! It is to be free

¹ S. John xiii. 15.

² Gal. v. 1.

³ Gal. vi. 2.

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from inordinate love of money, the financial slavery which dominates the lives of the covetous !

It is to be free from slavery to self, the meanest of all slavery ; the slavery of the man who has made an idol of self, and falls down and worships it daily, whose whole life is controlled by the spirit of selfishness ; for, as S. Paul says, " Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey ; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness ? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine whereunto ye were delivered. And being made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness " ¹—servants of Jesus Christ.

The Jewish nation was God's elect people, elected to serve the world. That privilege, that responsibility, that duty, now belongs to every Christian. In our home life, in our social life, in our life as citizens, we must remember we are elected to God's service, to be the leaven by which the world around us is being leavened into missionary work at home and abroad.

Why was I made ? What is God's purpose for me in this world ? What is the answer ? To be the servant of the Lord—not a useless, unprofitable servant, but treading in the steps of my Master, Who was the true Servant of the Lord. In this life I am " to do the Will of Him that sent me, and to finish His work, " ² that in the life that has no ending I may enter into the joy of my Lord.

¹ Rom. vi. 16-19.

² S. John iv. 34.

Sermon XVI.

PREPARATION FOR WORK.

(The Second Sunday after Christmas.)

S. LUKE I. I.

“The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”



THE beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ—that is, the preaching of the good news that the kingdom of Heaven was at hand; that man's salvation, though not yet won by the death upon the Cross, was assured by the Incarnation of the Son of God; that light had begun to shine in this world of darkness, light which the darkness should never be able again to overcome; that truth had been born into this world of error, truth so great that it should ultimately prevail over all opposition; that love had entered the contest with sin and death, love stronger than sin, stronger than death.

S. Mark opens the gospel with a description of the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. This he traces to the proclamation by S. John the Baptist and the Baptism of our Lord Jesus Christ—the two great events by which the work of His ministry was preceded. These two figures stand out in impressive grandeur, our Lord and His great predecessor—two Lights, He Who had come to be the Light of the world, and the man sent from God, who came to bear witness of that Light. The effects of their appearance and preaching were extraordinary. S. John drew all men to him, apparently by the example of his ascetic life and the power of his fearless preaching. He denounced sin in every station of life; he

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preached repentance, and with such success that there "went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judæa, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." ¹

S. John is followed in his preaching by our Lord, and though the effects were even more wonderful, the method was not the same. His life did not appeal by its outward asceticism of food or dress, as S. John's did, and His words, while they reached men's hearts and touched men's consciences, differed from S. John's, in that they seem to have won men more by their graciousness than by their fire, for the first recorded criticism of our Lord's words are, they all "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth." ²

I. But the two were alike in this, that they had undergone a special training for their ministry. In each case the instrument had been sharpened to the keenest possible edge before it was used, and to this perhaps may be traced its immediate and striking effect. The preparation of S. John was carried out apparently in the solitudes of the wilderness, in prayer, fasting, and communing with God. The preparation of his Master was in the thirty years of the hidden life at Nazareth.

Most of the great events which have changed the course of this world, whether in its physical aspect or in its social and political progress, have been prepared for during a period of greater or less duration. The volcanic disturbances which have transformed so greatly the outward aspect of this earth have been for the most part the result of forces at work for a long time before the final catastrophe produced with startling suddenness its tremendous and lasting results. We see this, for instance, in the eruptions of Vesuvius, which

¹S. Matt. iii. 5, 6.

²S. Luke iv. 22.

two thousand years ago buried Herculaneum and Pompeii under streams of lava; or only yesterday, in the still more disastrous eruption of Mont Pelee in the Island of Martinique. We find it also in the great political upheavals by which the course of nations has been changed, at least for a time. Such was the revolution in England in the seventeenth century under Cromwell, and the revolution in France at the close of the eighteenth century.

And it pleased GOD to work according to a similar law in that tremendous change brought about in the human race by the ministry of Jesus Christ. How brief it was! a little more than three short years! How marvellous in its effects! It changed not only for time, but for eternity, the hopes of the human race; and it was prepared for by thirty years of seclusion at Nazareth. It was not so much that this preparation was necessary for the bringing about of the great result, as that our Lord willed to fulfil this law, as He fulfilled other laws of human life, in order to leave us an example, in order to teach us the importance of preparation for GOD's work and the lesson of patient waiting for GOD's appointed hour to come.

II. Last Sunday we studied Christ's fulfilment of the Mosaic law that every first-born child should be presented in the temple. Let us to-day examine the manner in which He fulfilled that universal law of human life, that for great occasions GOD trains men for His purposes, sharpens the instrument for His use.

In our Lord's Childhood and early Manhood at Nazareth we observe that He fulfilled the law before He taught it; that He practised obedience before He began to command; that with Him, throughout His life, example went before precept, for we are told in the description of S. Luke's Gospel, that it was a treatise "of all that Jesus began both to do and teach."¹

¹ Acts i. 1.

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This brings before us the truth, that Jesus began to do before He began to teach. How many teachers there are who teach what is good, but do not practise it! There was not a command that our Lord enjoined, that He had not first Himself fulfilled; so that He spoke out of the fulness of His own experience, and His words were enforced by the power of His own example.

1. Christ teaches us, first by the thirty years of His hidden life at Nazareth, *the preparation of waiting*. How hard it is to wait! especially when our soul is on fire with some great project for GOD's glory which we are burning to carry out; and the years pass, and the opportunity does not seem to come. How difficult it is to be patient during the long period of waiting! But it is still more difficult during this period to keep our purpose ever before us, not to allow our life to be diverted from the goal, not to allow our enthusiasm to flag, to realize that we are waiting for GOD to make the opportunity, waiting with the conviction "Mine hour is not yet come." Nevertheless, with the conviction that the hour will come, and that when the fulness of the time is come, the moment which GOD sees to be the right moment, He will set before us an open door.

Though most of our life may have been spent in waiting, GOD's purpose for us can be accomplished as well in a few years as in a long life; what makes work for GOD effective is not length of years, not mere energy of character, but trust in GOD and perfect conformity to His Will.

Our Lord spent thirty years in waiting. Consider the work that was before Him, that He had come unto this world to do! He had come to save the world, to win it back to GOD; a work so tremendous that all other work sinks into absolute insignificance compared with it. And yet the years pass on—childhood, adolescence, early manhood—thirty years

roll by, before GOD's hour comes, and the mighty work is begun.

Read the twenty-seventh Psalm, and reflect on its last words, "Tarry thou the Lord's leisure: be strong, and He shall comfort thine heart; and put thou thy trust in the Lord." Waiting is an immense opportunity for the exercise of that side of faith which we describe as trust in GOD. How much of our work is spoiled because we trust in ourselves, in our gifts, in our influence, instead of trusting only in GOD! We look upon the work as our work, and forget that it is His work; that often the long period of waiting is necessary in order to teach us to tarry the Lord's leisure, in order that we may learn to put our trust wholly in GOD.

The student of Church history cannot but be struck by the fact that in almost all great religious movements the work has been practically accomplished in a very brief period of time, but almost always by a man who has spent many years in waiting, almost always by one who has had before him the desire to do this work, but has been held back from it by obstacles of various kinds. Such a man, however, has waited patiently, not losing his enthusiasm, but gathering strength, as it were, by waiting, until the hour has come, the opportunity has offered, and in a few short years his labours have been crowned with success.

It was so with the founders of most of the religious orders. S. Ignatius of Loyola was thirty years of age before he gave himself unreservedly to the service of GOD, and he had to wait eighteen years before he was able to begin his life's work in the foundation of his Order; but so well prepared were he and the first fathers of his Order during this period of waiting, that their work at once took root; and when he died seventeen years later, his Order was divided into twelve provinces and numbered a hundred colleges.

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Even more striking is the story of the foundation of the Passionists by S. Paul of the Cross. Again and again those who had joined him in his purpose fell away and left him, but he persevered with indomitable courage. And from the time that he conceived the plan of the Order which he felt himself called to found, to the day when it received approval and so became a religious Order, was a period of twenty-five years. He was fifty years of age before the beginning of his life's work was reached. He died in 1775. And now there is no quarter of the globe in which the Passionists are not at work as a missionary power.

In giving these examples of patient preparation for a work for God, crowned with great success, I do not of course mean to indorse all the actions of these communities; in the best works tares grow up among the wheat, but there can be no question in regard to the devotion to God's Will, and the desire for God's glory, which inspired their founders.

2. The time of waiting was with our Lord a time of work. From one point of view we may regard it as the work of training one Perfect Soul for God, the most Perfect Soul that has ever glorified God. There is a great danger among those who feel called to special works for God to overlook the importance of perfecting their own souls.

S. Paul alludes to this when he speaks of the life of discipline which he led, lest that by any means, whilst he preached to others, he himself should be found reprobate.¹ The time of waiting should be a time of work in our own souls, the work of penitence, eradicating, by God's help, the weeds of evil we recognize there; developing, by God's grace, the seeds of virtue.

When a man is called to any special work for God, the claims of that work are often so absorbing that it is difficult

¹ 1 Cor. ix. 27.

for him to get a great deal of time for prayer and meditation and the training of his own soul. It is therefore so much the more important that this should be done, or at least should be begun, in periods of waiting. It will be helpful sometimes to reflect that GOD is keeping me waiting because I am not yet ready to do His work; my character has not been properly moulded; my spiritual powers have not yet been sufficiently developed; the instrument is not yet sharpened. I must give myself to this work of preparation, and then GOD will perhaps graciously use me.

Another work to be kept before us in such times of waiting is the study of Holy Scripture. Whatever work we may be called to, but especially if it be of a missionary character, whether as priest or layman, much must depend upon our real knowledge of the Word of GOD. If we have to contend with spiritual foes in rescuing other souls from their power, the sword of the Spirit with which we must meet them is the Word of GOD. If we have to meet our own temptations, we learn from the example of our Blessed Lord to meet temptation by drawing from the armoury of Holy Scripture the weapons which it so abundantly supplies.

But the study of Holy Scripture cannot be adequately carried out in a few weeks, or even years. We should therefore make the best of our times of waiting to delve into that gold mine of truth from which we must draw much of the riches which we are to dispense to those among whom we are called to work.

3. With our Lord, the hidden life at Nazareth was a life of obedience. We are told He went down with His parents to Nazareth, "and was subject unto them."¹ Obedience is the great virtue of the Holy Childhood. There is no period of life when it is so easy to learn to obey as in child-

¹S. Luke ii. 51.

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hood; and if obedience be not then learned, it may be impossible afterwards to acquire that virtue.

There is nothing of greater importance in the bringing up of children than to teach them obedience—unquestioning, prompt, and cheerful obedience—not only that the family life may be happier, but because obedience is the foundation for all strength of character in later life. To learn to obey, is to learn to command the rebellious subjects of our own will, our own evil passions. It is to learn self-control. And it is a truism, that no one is ever likely to learn to command who has not first learned to obey.

Our Blessed Lord in His Childhood was subject to His parents. He set an example of holy obedience to them; and He was able afterwards to command the world; for how many in all ages and countries have recognized the commands of Jesus Christ as the laws of their life! Many people in their folly think it is easier to command than to obey, at least, that it is more pleasant. They forget that a position of authority implies great responsibility; that it may be easy to issue arbitrary orders and to enforce obedience upon those who are dependent upon us, but this is not really to command. To command is to wield a power of influence which others recognize, not merely because of our position, but on account of the force of our character. That force implies the virtue of self-control, and real self-control is rarely acquired by any but those who in early life learned obedience.

We are still at the beginning of the new year. Let us start with these lessons which we learn from the Childhood and early life of our Blessed Lord; and let us strive to follow in the footsteps of that Life through the Lenten Season which will so soon be here, in order that we may so live that we may not fear to die, and so die that we may rise with Christ to life everlasting.

Sermon XVII.

THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF LIGHT.

(The Epiphany.)

ISAIAH LX. I.

“Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.”

THE sixtieth chapter of Isaiah, like the fifty-fourth, is a prophecy complete in itself. There Israel is exhorted to rejoice, and is comforted with the promise that she shall never be forsaken. Here she is bidden to arise and enter upon the glory which at last is her own. So in a sense this chapter is the fulfilment of the promises in the former.

The ode—for such it is—consists of five stanzas, of which we shall consider only the first. As in the former chapter, Zion is addressed under the image of a woman—a crushed and desolate woman. But now her time of trial is over, now her night of darkness has ended, and she is bidden to arise. The light of glory from the Lord, which shall shine upon Zion, is contrasted with the darkness which shall cover the earth, the gross darkness which shall cover the people.

We are reminded of God's wonders of old in Egypt, when “there was a thick darkness in all the land of Egypt three days: . . . but all the children of Israel had light in their dwellings.”¹ So shall it be, says Isaiah, when God visits His people with the fulness of His blessing, darkness among nations, light in God's Church, a light which shall

¹ Ex. x. 22, 23.

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lighten the nations, and shall be the glory of God's people Israel.

The immediate reference of the prophecy is to God's deliverance of Israel from captivity, and her restoration to her own land. Its complete fulfilment is found five centuries later in the coming of the Messiah, in Whom light is indeed restored to Israel, for in the third verse the Prophet says, "The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising." And to-day, the Feast of the Epiphany, we are celebrating the fulfilment of this prophecy. We are commemorating the coming of the Magi, the first-fruits of the Gentile world, to the Cradle of Bethlehem, and the Manifestation of Christ through them to the Gentile peoples amongst whom they dwelt, for we are told "they departed into their own country another way," and without doubt there proclaimed the wonders they had seen.

This, however, does not exhaust the prophecy; for it is being fulfilled continually both in the Church and in the life of every true Christian.

I. We may first then consider this passage of Isaiah as an exhortation to the Church of Christ, always in season, but needed especially in times of laxity and sloth.

1. The history of the Church is a history of a struggle between light and darkness, between good and evil. The battle is always going on, but with varied fortune. At times the Church, trusting in her Master's promise and true to His commands, waxes so strong that her enemies are put to flight, her light shines so brightly that the darkness is dispersed. This is the Church's day; but, alas! in the Church militant it does not last.

The night comes when the powers of evil, not through their own strength, but through the Church's weakness and want of zeal, regain the ground from which they have been

driven, bringing back with them the darkness of sin, and the Church's light burns dimly—so dimly, that to some it seems in danger of being extinguished. This is the Church's night, when GOD raises up great saints who become leaders in the fight, rallying the Church's armies and restoring her life and work.

At such times as these the exhortation of Isaiah is especially in season. After times of laxity and spiritual darkness, such as we may trace periodically in the history of the Church, the exhortation comes to arise and shine. The call to "Arise" tells of the need of throwing off the sloth which has fettered her energies, and putting forth her strength in external work and activity.

The exhortation to "shine," on the other hand, speaks of the need of renewing the interior life of the Church by prayer and spiritual exercises, the removal of the covering of sin which hides her light from the world, the cleansing and trimming of the wick of her lamp by penitence, its replenishment with the oil of grace, which is the work of the Holy Spirit within her.

The image seems to be borrowed from the dawn of a day in the East, where the sunrise is almost instantaneous, and the land covered with the darkness of night is suddenly flooded with the blaze of radiant sunlight. The sun's very presence seems to say to the slumberer, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come."

How wonderful is the dawn of such a day! How wonderful is the dawn of a new day in the Church's life, when after a long period of slothfulness and indifference, of darkness and night, GOD's call sounds in her ears, "Arise, shine; for thy light is come." The Church's light is not her own; she shines with the light of her Lord's Presence, and He is ever within her; and though the lantern in which the light burns

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may have become obscured by layers of dirt—the result of the neglect of years—when this has been removed from without, and the wick has been trimmed and cleansed from within, the light shines brightly once more!

But this work is gradual and takes time. As we look back upon the history of the Church we can see again and again in the great religious revivals of the past how it has progressed. In the great Catholic revival of our own day and in our own country, we can trace the stages in the work by which faithful men, with tireless industry, splendid patience and dauntless courage, went to work in obedience to the call “Arise, shine”; went to work in the spirit of penitence and of hope, to restore the energies of our own Mother, the Church of England!

The result of the Church’s obedience to this exhortation is seen in its effect on the world. The Church’s mission is to enlighten the world and to disperse the darkness of error and sin which is ever striving to enslave man in the world, and in proportion as her own light is shining brightly does she accomplish this mission. Light has a wonderful attractive power, and as we have seen in times of religious revival in the past, so soon as the light begins to shine, souls are attracted to it—men flock to the Church to listen to her teachings and to obey her behests!

2. The Prophet not only exhorts the Church to “Arise, shine”; but gives the reason—“for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.” The Church is not bidden to shine with any light of her own, but with the light of her Lord; not with any glory of mere worldly power or earthly pomp, but with the Glory of the Lord, with the Shekinah of His Presence. “And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.” When the Church shines with her Lord’s light, she becomes a

missionary power, she carries the torch into lands which are in heathen darkness, and wins nations to her Lord! The Feast of the Epiphany is full of missionary lessons. Then the Magi were led by light to the Light, by a star to the Day-star—Christ!

II. But Isaiah has a message to us as individuals this Epiphany.

1. To us the Prophet says "Arise"—to us, who while free, perhaps, from grievous sin, are slothful in our work for GOD. To the soul enslaved by sin, S. Paul wrote, "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."¹ This soul needed to awake and throw off the chain of sin! The class whom the Prophet addresses is better off. These are awake and free from grievous sin. He does not call them to arise from the dead, but to arise and shine!

This does not imply serious sin, so much as sloth—sins of omission rather than of commission. But we must make a real effort to throw off sloth; we must not be content merely with the negative avoidance of great sin; we must strive for the positive performance of Christian duty; we must *shine* so that the world may be better for our life, brighter for our light.

But how can we shine? What we have said of the Church applies equally to the individual. We must begin with the work of penitence and self-discipline, cleansing the lantern of our outward life, that it may not obscure the light which is within us. And then we must keep our gaze fixed upon our Lord. S. Paul says, "We all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord."² It is by beholding Christ that we come to reflect Christ in our own lives.

In the fifth verse of this chapter of Isaiah we have a wonder-

¹ Ephes. v. 14.

² 2 Cor. iii. 18.

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ful image, which is obscured by our translation. The Prophet says, "Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee." This might be better rendered, "Then shalt thou see, and be *radiant*, and thine heart shall throb and grow large; for there shall be turned upon thee the sea's flood tide." As a commentator has pointed out, the image suggests the light which a face catches from sparkling water. He says, "It is liquid light, light that ripples and sparkles and runs across the face." As we read in the Psalm, "They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed."¹

We are to shine with the light of Christ within us, with the reflected light which comes from gazing upon His Face, and in proportion as we do so shall we bring other souls to Him. How many there are in this dark world whom we know not by name, who are watching for the light as ship-wrecked mariners watch for the dawning of the day—as the traveller by night, who has lost his way, searches for a light to guide him to a cottage where he may find some friendly hand to set him once more in the right path! How many such may be looking to us for a light! looking to us with ardent hope to find the light in us. How sad to disappoint such hopes, how glorious to fulfil them! The Magi were led by a star to Christ, and God may enable us by a star to lead others to the bright light of His dear Son.

On a dark night, even a tiny lamp in a cottage window may be seen from afar and may guide the traveller on his way to a brighter light. So, though we may be conscious that we have but little power of eloquence, but little gift of learning, if the light is shining in us, it may be the star which will lead others to Christ.

¹ Psalm xxxiv. 5.

2. "For thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Christmas Day and Epiphany, shepherds and wise men, Jews and Gentiles, brought to Christ. He Who is our Light has indeed come. We kept Advent in preparation for His coming, we received the Light of the world, our Master and Saviour Jesus Christ, into our own souls in our Christmas Communion. Now let us go and say to some other soul, "The Master is come, and calleth for thee."¹ So shall we fulfil our missionary obligation this Epiphany.

Sermon XVIII.

THE BAPTISM OF CHRIST.

(The Epiphany.)

S. LUKE III. 21, 22.

"Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, and the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon Him, and a Voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art My beloved Son ; in Thee I am well pleased."

THREE events are commemorated on the Feast of the Epiphany—Christ's manifestation to the Gentiles, by the star which led the Magi to Bethlehem ; His manifestation to S. John the Baptist at His Baptism, by the Voice from heaven which proclaimed Him to be the Son of God ; and the descent of the Holy Ghost in the form of a dove. S. John himself refers to this, saying of our Lord, "I knew Him not ; but He that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon Whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, the same is

¹S. John xi. 28.

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He which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God.”¹

Lastly, His manifestation to His disciples at Cana of Galilee, by the miracle of turning the water into wine, a manifestation which, we are told, led His disciples to believe on Him.²

To-day let us consider the second of these events, our Lord's baptism.

The baptism of Jesus Christ by S. John the Baptist, like His circumcision, was not necessary, since S. John's baptism was one of repentance for the washing away of sin; and our Lord had no sin to wash away or to repent of.

S. Ignatius of Antioch says that its purpose was not that Christ might be cleansed, but rather that He might by His baptism cleanse water and sanctify it to the mystical washing away of sin; and these words of S. Ignatius are incorporated into our Baptismal Office in the prayer for blessing the water.

S. John himself expressed the same difficulty, when he said to our Lord, “I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me?” But “Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.”³

The dispensation of S. John was “from heaven” as truly as was that of Moses.⁴ It was therefore as necessary that our Lord should respect it, as that He should fulfil the law of Moses. He was baptized then for the same reason that He was circumcised, that He might set us an example of exact obedience to positive precepts, that He might warn us that if we are to “fulfil all righteousness” we must not neglect any of God's ordinances, even though we may think them unnecessary. There were, however, other reasons why He was baptized.

¹ S. John i. 33, 34.

² Cf. S. John ii. 11.

³ S. Matt. iii. 14, 15.

⁴ Cf. S. Mark xi. 30, 31; 1 Cor. x. 2.

I. Our Lord's baptism was His consecration to His three-fold office as Prophet, Priest and King. These three offices in the Old Testament were conferred by anointing with oil; immediately therefore after His baptism by S. John our Lord is anointed by the Holy Ghost, of which the unction by oil was a type. This S. Peter points out when he says, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost,"¹ and from this His title "Christ" or "Messiah" is derived. He is the Prophet to Whom all the prophets of the Old Testament bear witness; He is the Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek; He is the King to Whom the Lord God will give the throne of His father David,

We must not, however, suppose that the Holy Ghost was given to our Lord first at His baptism; the Holy Ghost was with Him always, for in the union of the Divine Persons the Three are One; but this anointing was a consecration of the Incarnate Son, God and Man, to His sacred office. The Spirit descended in the form of a dove, indicating the character of our Lord's ministry, the dove being the symbol of purity, sincerity, and gentleness.

In the Book of Leviticus we find God giving directions to Moses for the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, and we may observe three separate acts of consecration:

First, "Moses brought Aaron and his sons" to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, "and washed them with water."² Then "Moses took the anointing oil, . . . and he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him."³ Thirdly, Moses slew the ram of consecration and "took of the blood of it, and put it upon the tip of Aaron's right ear, and upon the thumb of his right hand, and upon the great toe of his right foot."⁴ There were, there-

¹ Acts i. 38.

² Levit. viii. 6.

³ vv. 10, 12.

⁴ v. 23.

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fore, so to speak, three baptisms, of water, of oil, and of blood, in the consecration of Aaron.

So we find three similar baptisms in the consecration of our great High-Priest Jesus Christ, (1) the baptism of water in the Jordan; (2) the baptism of oil, or of the Spirit, at the Transfiguration, when the cloud overshadowed them, and a Voice out of the cloud said, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him," the cloud representing the Holy Spirit. This baptism of the Spirit may also be recognized immediately after the baptism by S. John the Baptist in the Jordan, when the Holy Spirit descended upon Him. (3) And the baptism of blood was fulfilled in Gethsemane and on Calvary, when He shed all His precious Blood for us.

We are, however, now only concerned with the first of these, the baptism of water, which in our Lord's case was immediately followed by the baptism of the Spirit.

II. S. John, as we find a few verses before the words of our text, drew the attention of the multitude to the difference between his baptism and our Lord's baptism, for he said, "I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I cometh, the latchet of Whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire."¹ Here we have a contrast between water baptism and fire baptism. S. John's baptism was a water baptism, a baptism of repentance. It dealt with the guilt of sin and the need of cleansing from sin. It was accompanied by a confession, not of sinfulness, but of definite acts of sin which the candidate for baptism had committed. The baptism itself was a symbol of the washing away of those sins.

The baptism of our Lord in the river Jordan was a baptism of the Holy Ghost and of fire, which is one of the symbols of the Holy Ghost. This baptism conveys what water baptism

¹ S. Luke iii. 16.

typifies—the remission of sins—but in addition it bestows renewal, regeneration, a new life, the life of the Spirit. And on this account the symbol of fire is specially appropriate, for fire not only is the supreme cleanser, since it searches into the very inner substance of that which is subjected to it, but all life in this world is associated with the keeping up, so to speak, of a fire within us. We live by the combustion of our own bodies, carried on through the action of the lungs in breathing. By this process our bodies are supplied with heat, at the expense of the burning up of a certain amount of tissue, and the fuel is supplied through food.

This is symbolic of what takes place in baptism, when the fire of the Holy Spirit is kindled in our nature, a fire which must be kept burning, which must be supplied with fuel by acts of sacrifice, and which, if it burns within us, will consume all the dross within us, thus purifying our nature on the one hand, and on the other filling us with the supernatural warmth of charity, the love of God, and bestowing upon us a new life, the life of the Spirit, by which we become new creatures, the sons of God, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”¹

Again we may notice that, while water cleanses the surface of things, fire penetrates to their inner substance and purifies it. The water baptism therefore of S. John typified only the cleansing of acts of sin, as we may gather from his exhortation to those who have been baptized, to the publicans, “Exact no more than that which is appointed you”; to the soldiers, “Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with your wages”;² while the fire baptism of Christ reaches to those inner powers of the soul to which acts of sin may be traced—the thoughts of the heart, the motives of action, the decisions of the will. This our Lord shows in the

¹ Rom. viii. 14.

² Cf. S. Luke iii. 13, 14.

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Sermon on the Mount.¹ We pray therefore in the Collect for Purity, "Cleanse the thoughts of our hearts by the inspiration of Thy Holy Spirit," that is, purify with the *fire* of the Holy Ghost our very inner nature.

III. Lastly, we may see in the signs which attended our Lord's baptism symbols of the effects which follow our own baptism. These signs were three: (1) The opening of the heavens; (2) the descent of the Holy Spirit; and (3) the Voice which proclaimed the divine Sonship.

1. The opening of the heavens. The place where John was baptizing was Bethabara, "the house of passage." It was so called from being the place where Joshua and the Israelites crossed the Jordan. There the waters were parted to make a pathway to the promised land, which was a type of heaven. The heavens themselves are rent and opened to the child of God, who in baptism is made an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven, a citizen of that glorious country!

2. The descent of the Holy Spirit. It is in baptism that the Holy Spirit descends upon us, enriching us with all His gifts; inspiring our souls, lightening us with celestial fire, anointing us with His sevenfold gifts, kindling in us the fire of love; transforming the natural man in us into the spiritual man.

3. The proclamation of the divine Sonship. When our Lord came up out of the water the Holy Spirit descended upon Him, and a Voice was heard from heaven saying, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."

As the waters of baptism are poured upon us, and the Holy Spirit descends, God proclaims us to be His sons by adoption. Before we were the children of wrath, bondslaves of the devil; now we are the sons of God, "delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God!"²

¹ Cf. S. Matt. v. 21, 22; 27, 28.

² Rom. viii. 21.

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The Magi who came to our Lord's cradle at Bethlehem on this Feast of the Epiphany, we are told, returned to their own country by another way, and doubtless carried the good news of Christ's birth to their homes. So let us resolve to return from this Feast of the Epiphany with a greater appreciation of our privileges as children of God, and to show in our lives the power of that Holy Spirit, of that new life, which we received in baptism. It is not enough for us to commemorate the festivals of our Lord's life as merely interesting historical events in the past; we must strive, rather, in keeping these festivals, to show that what our Lord then did for us lives on in us now; that as He manifested Himself on this Festival of the Epiphany, so, following His steps, we may manifest the power of His grace to those around us.

Sermon XIX.

THE FEAR OF MAN AND THE FEAR OF GOD.

(The First Sunday after Epiphany.) ✓

ISAIAH LI. 12, 13.

"I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass: and forgettest the Lord thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor?"



FROM those in Israel who reject God's laws the Prophet in this chapter turns to those "that follow after righteousness . . . that seek the Lord." He calls the latter to reflect on certain great facts connected with man's weakness and God's power, and from

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these facts to draw conclusions which may serve as a basis for future life and conduct. Thrice in the chapter do we find the injunction to hearken—first, in the words of the Prophet, afterwards twice repeated by Jehovah Himself. The command is primarily addressed to the Jewish Nation, who at this time were threatened by the might of Babylon, here spoken of as the oppressor, and they are reminded that there is a power greater than Babylon's to be taken into consideration—the power of God—and Jerusalem is exhorted to consider which of these powers she should fear, and to which she should look for deliverance.

We may, however, profitably consider this passage as addressed to each of us, and therefore, turning from its historical application, we may examine the message it has for ourselves.

Man is here represented as standing between two powers—God and his fellow-man—each claiming to influence his life; and God calls upon him to consider whether, being what he is, his conduct should be influenced by the fear of man, or by the fear of God.

I. "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy Maker?" Man is first to consider what he is—to look into himself. And what does he find? Two things—weakness, and therefore dependence. Man is as grass, which groweth up in a day and withereth; and man is dependent for the preservation of his life, and for the supply of his needs, to some extent, upon his fellow-man, but far more upon God. That which a man knows of himself—that he is weak and unable to stand alone—this he knows also of his fellow-man. Why, then, should he live in continual fear of the world, which is made up of men like

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himself, weak and dependent, whilst he forgets GOD, Who is All-Powerful and absolutely independent?

How greatly most of us fear the world, although we do not like to admit it, and perhaps persuade ourselves that such is not the case! But if we turn from the examination of our own lives, into which the element of self-love enters so largely, and look out upon the lives of other men, where our judgment will not be thus warped, we see at once that they are greatly influenced in their actions by what the world will say, by what people will think, by a social or professional code, which in their hearts they despise but have not the courage to ignore, which they realize is not based upon what is true and right, but upon a much lower standard of public opinion of social morality! We are quite ready, probably, to admit that most men are slaves to the world's tyranny, that they dare not go contrary to its views, that they are afraid to take a higher stand, either in religion or morals, than that of their class, lest they should be criticized or laughed at, or even ostracized by the society in which they move. In other words, they are afraid of the world, they have not the moral courage to stand up against it, where they know it to be lax in morals or feeble in faith!

And why is this? The text suggests that it is because they forget what the world is and what GOD is. They forget how very little real power the world can have either to help us or to hurt us. The world cannot prolong our life one day; and while it may inflict some mental suffering by its scorn, or perhaps some loss of fortune by its opposition and ill will, it can rob us neither of our health of body, nor of our peace of soul.

"Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man?" The world is but an assembly of men like ourselves, each of them weak and dependent; and though they may gather some

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strength from numbers, how little the world can really do to permanently injure one who trusts in GOD, and is therefore under His protection!

But while the text suggests the folly of living in continual fear of the world—that is, of beings like ourselves, who are mortal and changeable like the grass, springing up and withering away—it also recalls to us the worse than folly, the impiety, of forgetting GOD, Who is our Maker and the Maker of all things around us—the earth on which we live, and the heavens to which we lift our eyes! Who art thou, that thou fearest man and forgettest GOD?—fearest a creature like thyself, whose powers are so limited, and forgettest the GOD Who made thee and all things, Who is ready to help thee if thou call upon Him, and to Whom thou must render an account of all the actions of thy life!

How wonderfully this passage brings before us the folly of moral cowardice! It is an anticipation of the teaching of our Blessed Lord, Who said, “Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.”¹ Not only is our own life in GOD’s hands, but the life of those who oppose us. Not only can He give us strength to meet the difficulties put in our path by others, but He can remove those difficulties.

In the case of the Jews, to whom this passage in Isaiah was addressed, they dreaded the threatening might of Babylon, and in their fear forgot GOD, Who was their only help against that power. So is it now with those who are moral cowards. In their dread of what man will think, or what the world will say, they do not consider what GOD will think of them—what GOD will say to them—in the day in which they have to render

¹S. Matt. x. 28.

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an account of those very words and actions which proceeded from their moral cowardice, from their fear of man!

But there is another way in which this fear of man affects our life. Not only does it lead us to say and do things to please the world, which we know must displease GOD, but it robs our spiritual life of all definiteness and power! The man whose words are inspired, whose actions are directed, by mere human respect, the fear of what men will say or think, is never likely to dare anything noble for love of GOD. As the words of our text tell us, in having respect for man he forgets GOD; GOD is not the Supreme Object of his love; GOD's laws are not the unalterable standard of his conduct; GOD's work is not the greatest interest of his life. And so his spiritual life is indefinite and vague; it brings him no happiness; it affords him no strength; his soul is not at peace; he is anxious and worried lest he should offend the world, lest he should go against its opinions. If he tries to serve GOD at all, it is in the vain attempt to accomplish the impossible, to serve two masters—GOD and mammon—to harmonize two conflicting claims—the claims of the world and those of GOD!

II. We have seen that the fear of man involves forgetfulness of GOD! Let us go a step further and consider what forgetfulness of GOD carries in its train.

1. It results in loss of faith; not merely the loss of that intellectual assent to the dogmas of revelation, which constitutes objective faith; it involves this, but more; it leads to loss of *trust* in GOD, to loss of that subjective faith which enables man to cling to GOD always, which makes GOD's power operative through grace in his soul, and which endows man with a gift enabling him to regard the things of this life in the light of eternity!

2. Forgetfulness of GOD issues in loss of hope, for hope depends largely on memory. We cannot really keep alive

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our hope for things which are rarely, if ever, in our mind. If we cease to think of GOD, we shall no longer remember His gracious promises, His glorious purpose for us—our home in eternity—and with the loss of hope in the things of GOD, we shall also lose our earnestness in seeking them, since hope is the spring of all human action, whether in the natural or spiritual sphere.

3. Then, too, forgetfulness of GOD leads to loss of love. Indeed, true love of GOD would render it impossible that we should ever forget Him, for love kindles the powers of the memory as nothing else can do! And with the loss of faith, and hope and love, we lose all that makes for man's true happiness both here and hereafter. The world can bestow upon us a passing happiness which is largely made up of excitement, but which does not last. The only true happiness, the only happiness which can last, is the joy of loving GOD and realizing His love for us!

III. But what does GOD promise in our text if, instead of fearing man, we fear Him? We find it in the first words: "I, even I, am He that comforteth you." Life is full of sorrows; the world is not a congenial environment for those who love and fear GOD; but GOD says to such, "I, even I, am He that comforteth you." The reiteration of the pronoun emphasizes the greatness of our Comforter. He is no less than GOD, GOD Himself, the Almighty, the All-Seeing, Who is Love; Who, because He is Almighty, can help us to the uttermost; because He is All-Seeing, knows all our needs, all our sorrows; and Who, because He is Love, can comfort us in all our adversities. And what a comfort this is!—the gift of the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, Who hath given "unto them that mourn in Zion, . . . beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might

be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified.”¹

Let us, then, well consider GOD’s challenge—who art thou that fearest man and forgettest GOD? And the result of our consideration will bestow upon us courage to enable us to meet the oppressions of the world, and holy fear, to prevent us from ever forgetting GOD!

Sermon XX.

THE FLIGHT INTO EGYPT.

(The First Sunday after Epiphany.)

S. MATTHEW II. 13-15.

“And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young Child and His mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him. When he arose, he took the young Child and His Mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod.”

 HE advent of light disperses darkness, but in the moral world the powers of darkness return to the attack and strive to put out light. The history of the soul and of the Church is one long struggle between the powers of light and darkness, and it is symbolized in nature by the sequence of day and night. In the morning the sun arises, and darkness flies away, but night succeeds to day, and darkness returns. In nature we know this is caused by the motion of the earth upon its axis. In the moral world the alternations of light and darkness, of day and night, which we see in the soul of man and in the history of the Church, are

¹ Isaiah lxi. 3.

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the result of the vicissitudes in the great struggle between the powers of light and darkness, a struggle which will end in our becoming, for eternity, children of light or children of darkness.

S. John tells us in the opening words of his Gospel that "the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness overcame it not."¹ He is referring to the Incarnation, when GOD (Who at the creation of the world had said, "Let there be light: and there was light," the light of nature) said at the Annunciation, "Let there be light," and He Who was Light leaped into creation and became the Light of the world.

Henceforth the Light shineth in the darkness, and though the darkness strove to extinguish that Light it did not succeed, though it fought against the Light it was not able to *overcome* it. This is the meaning and more correct translation of the verse which is rendered in our Bibles, "the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not." The word (κατέλαβεν) rendered "comprehended," should be translated "overcame."

While the flight into Egypt was an important historical event in our Lord's life, like so many events in that life it was symbolic of the work that He had come to do and of its results in His Church and in the souls of His children. Let us so consider it to-day.

I. The coming of the Magi, led by light to the Light, was followed by two sad results, the massacre of the Innocents, and our Lord's flight into Egypt.

The Magi in their search came to Herod to inquire of him where the King of the Jews had been born. Herod asked of the priests, and finding from the prophecy of Micah² that Christ should be born in Bethlehem, sent the Magi there, with instructions that when they had found the young Child, they

¹ Cf. S. John i. 5.

² Micah v. 2.

were to bring him word again, that he might come and worship Him. Herod's intention of course was not to worship, but to murder the Child.

The Magi, however, were warned of GOD in a dream, and so departed without returning to Herod, who, when he discovered this, was exceeding wrath, and in order to carry out his purpose commanded that all the children in Bethlehem and the coasts thereof, under two years of age, should be put to death. Thus, he thought, Christ would certainly be slain, and the Light to which the star pointed would be extinguished.

GOD, however, always frustrates the designs of evil men when they interfere with His purposes; and so Joseph was warned in a dream and departed for Egypt in the night, with the young Child and His mother. Herod's horrible cruelty, therefore, did not accomplish its object. The Child and His parents escaped before the massacre took place.

Our Blessed Lord speaks of Himself especially as "the Light of the world" and as "the Truth." The two things which the evil world hates are light and truth; and so it strives to put out the Light and to kill the Truth.

Herod thought to kill the Truth while it was young and tender, and before it had many followers, before it could become powerful. But you cannot kill truth; you may kill its followers; but persecution only spreads truth; and that which happened as the result of Herod's attempt to kill the Truth is very much like what always happens. The world may put to death the followers of the Truth. Herod could massacre the children of Bethlehem, but the Truth Himself could not be killed by Herod. For awhile He was hidden in Egypt, but when the storm had passed and Herod was dead, our Lord came forth from His retirement and returned to the Holy Land.

This has ever been the history of the Church. During the

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first three centuries of its existence, the world strove to kill the truth, to stamp out Christianity. One after another of the world's tyrants persecuted the Church of Christ. The result was always the same—the tyrant died, the truth lived and spread. The mightiest power of the world—the Roman Empire—brought its strength to the work of extirpating Christianity, of killing the truth, but the truth conquered the Roman Empire, and at last converted it.

And this has been the history of the Church, for, while there has never since been such wholesale persecution as under the Roman Emperors, the world has returned to the attack again and again with different kinds of persecution—the assaults of heresy, the incursions of barbarians, the poison of a degenerate Christianity, corrupt in morals and lax in faith—one thing after another has been tried, each with a measure of temporary success; the truth has been driven into Egypt, its followers have been massacred—or worse, corrupted by the world.

The Light, however, has been kept alive in the hearts of a few of GOD's saints here and there in religious houses—as, for instance, in the Egyptian Desert, by the Monks of the Thebaid—but the world's tyrant, the world-power, has died, and the light has blazed forth again, the truth has come out of its concealment, the Gospel of Jesus Christ has been preached to the world, the Standard of the Cross has been lifted once more, and around it have rallied the children of light!

II. The study of the history of the Church is of great interest and encouragement to us, for we see how it reproduces the life of its Lord, always persecuted but always victorious, shining in the darkness, and the darkness striving to overcome it, but never succeeding.

While it is encouraging to trace this in the Church, it is

of greater importance that we should look for it in our own individual lives. At the Annunciation, as we have said, in response to God's fiat, "Let there be Light," Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the Light of the world, shone forth in the darkness. At the moment of baptism, as the priest pours the water upon the child and utters the words, "I baptize thee In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen," at God's command light shines in that infant soul, a little, tiny spark, the presence of Christ Himself, in that regenerated nature.

The presence of the light in that child's soul is a challenge to the powers of darkness. And throughout that child's life in this world the struggle goes on between the good and evil in that child, as its will accepts, as motives of action, the suggestions of the lower nature or the impulses of the Spirit of God.

It was night when Joseph took the young Child and His mother and departed into Egypt; and the world, under the dominion of its prince, strives to make night in the soul of the Christian, that Jesus may be driven out of that soul.

The light that shines in us is the light of Christ's presence; and that is the light which the world would put out, which the world hates, for the life of a man in whom the light of Christ is shining brilliantly is a reproach to the world, and so the world tries to drive out Christ from that soul. The only way it can accomplish this is by bringing into that soul the darkness of sin, and this must be done through the consent of the man's own will.

We know how night draws on; the darkness comes gradually, so gradually sometimes that we hardly notice it as it steals on us, but at last we become conscious of the fact that it is quite dark, that the night is come. So with the Christian; the world tries gradually to creep into his soul.

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"A little worldliness! what can it matter?" is the argument it uses. "Every one does this or that, in recognition of the world's opinion." And the darkness steals on and on, a little more yielding to the world's demands, until at last some serious act of sin is committed, grace is lost, darkness fills the soul, Jesus has been driven out!

Well for that man if he realizes his condition, if he awakens to the fact that darkness is reigning in him, if he arouses himself with penitence to seek again the light which alone can disperse that darkness!

Sometimes we realize by God's light that the life of the Child in our heart is in danger, and then we must flee into Egypt, into the Egypt of the hidden life, in order that there the Child Who has intrusted Himself to our care may be safe from His foes and ours.

The Egypt of the hidden life! And what is that? Surely the life which, as S. Paul says, "is hid with Christ in God," a life which is still lived in this world, which does not require that we should flee into some desert or monastery, but does require that we should carefully guard the doors of the soul against the darkness of the world which strives to steal into our life. It is imperative that we should watch against the insidious arguments by which the world would endeavour to make us one of its own children, that we should examine and try the specious excuses which the world suggests as reasons why we should let it into our soul's life.

This, too, is the very purpose of religion—to enable us to cultivate the inner life, so to *fill* our soul, so to satisfy its needs, that there will be no room in the soul for worldliness. It is possible to live this hidden life with Christ in our heart, although surrounded by the busy world, although fulfilling our duties in it.

We must remember that we are not citizens of the world;

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we are citizens of heaven, citizens of the holy city. We are exiles here, waiting until the tyranny of the world be overpast; like the Holy Family in Egypt, who were not citizens of Egypt, but exiles there; they were citizens still of the Holy Land, waiting for the death of the tyrant Herod. They could not hasten the time of their exile, and when they returned to the land of Israel they found "that Archelaus did reign in Judæa in the room of his father Herod."¹

So one world power succeeds to another, and all world powers threaten the life of Jesus in the soul. They had to hide themselves again, this time not in Egypt, but in despised Nazareth; and there, hidden away from the world, the Child Jesus grew to perfect stature. They were in the dominions of Herod, in a village too humble for Herod to notice them.

Surely, this has a lesson for our souls, that it is in the practice of humility, or as S. Peter says,² by clothing ourselves with humility, that we can cast all our cares upon God, and escape much of the world's temptations and persecutions. Of all the virtues of the Christian life, humility is most alien to worldliness, for pride is the ruling power of the world; pride loves to attract attention, and so challenges many a temptation and meets with many a fall, while humility loves to escape notice, and so lives in comparative safety.

We may notice, therefore, in our study of the lessons which our Lord's flight into Egypt has for us:

1. That the presence of the Child Jesus in our soul brings down upon us the attack of the world, as it brought upon Bethlehem the persecution of Herod.

2. Yet at the same time that Child is our safety. We can say, in the words of the Psalmist, as we pass through this world, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me."³

¹ S. Matt. ii. 22.

² Cf. 1 S. Peter v. 5-7.

³ Psalm xxiii. 4.

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3. Nevertheless, while He is our safety, His very life in our souls depends upon our care; one act of mortal sin, and we crucify Him afresh, drive Him forth from His home in our hearts.

4. We may learn, too, that the events of our Lord's life on earth repeat themselves not only in the life of His Church, but in the experience of His children, for our Lord's life is our Example, and will be so long as the world shall last.

Sermon XXI.

THE THIRST OF THE SOUL. ✓

(The Second Sunday after Epiphany.)

ISAIAH LV. I, 2.

✓ "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?"

IN the fifty-third chapter Isaiah foretells the Passion of our Lord. In this he anticipates the essence of the Gospel in the free gift of salvation to all men who will heed God's call, the free gift of grace to those who will use it.

In our Lord's invitation on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles we recognize an echo of this prophecy—"If any man thirst, let him come unto Me, and drink."¹ We may, therefore, regard it not only as a passage of great importance as well as beauty, but as manifesting the unity of the teaching of the Old Testament with the New.

¹ S. John vii. 37.

The metaphor of thirst is the strongest figure which can be found to represent the intense craving of the soul for God. It is essentially an oriental figure, for in our cooler latitudes few ever really suffer extreme pangs of thirst. While the pains of hunger are often great, they are not to be compared to the intolerable suffering produced by unslaked thirst. We read that travellers across the desert, or ship-wrecked mariners at sea, without water for days, become frenzied by thirst. We do not find that this is the case with those who have to suffer for a long period the pangs of hunger; for great as they are, they do not produce delirium as thirst does.

As intense thirst represents the agony of desire of the soul for God, so water is naturally the symbol of Divine grace; for water, like grace, is absolutely necessary to life. No living thing, whether animal or vegetable, can exist without water, nor can spiritual life exist without grace. Again, water is the great purifying and cleansing element in nature, as grace is in the sphere of the soul. Water refreshes and revives those who are weary and faint, and grace is refreshment and new life to the fainting spirit of man. Water, too, like the air we breathe, is abundant and freely given to all men; and grace, as the very word implies, is the free gift of God to every soul that will accept it.

I. "Ho, every one that thirsteth." Man has various appetites and desires, and each in its lawful use impels man to an end which is for his good, and the pleasure which is associated with the use of an appetite is partly an incentive to, and partly a reward for, this lawful use. When, however, an appetite becomes perverted, its unlawful use sooner or later brings its own punishment.

The most common perversion of an appetite is making the pleasure associated with it an end in itself. We see this very frequently in the appetites of hunger and thirst. Their true

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end is the renewal of the waste in the tissues of the body. This is an end which is altogether good and necessary, if man is to live. But when a person makes eating or drinking an end in itself, irrespective of the amount needed for the refreshment and renewal of his body, the punishment of injured health generally follows, as seen in the glutton and the drunkard.

Each part of our nature has its own appetites. There are the appetites of the body, as hunger and thirst; of the mind, as curiosity; and of the soul, as the affections. But these do not exhaust the list, for there is an appetite of the whole man ever craving for something, the possession of which shall bestow that satisfaction which we call happiness; and the supreme problem of life is to find that which will satisfy this craving of the whole man.

The majority of men seek this happiness in the pursuit of sensuality, covetousness or ambition, that is, in feeding the body, soul or mind with the things of this world. But the confession of all such is that they have failed in finding what they sought. The sensualist, the lover of money, and the ambitious man, alike bear witness that when they have reached their goal and won their prize they do not find it satisfies them. The appetite of the whole man still craves for something more.

The two great schools of Greek philosophy recognized and attempted to deal with this problem of the insatiable craving of man for something that he does not possess in himself and cannot find in his surroundings. The Stoics met it by teaching that the appetites were to be restrained, that man was to make duty or virtue his end, not happiness. The Epicureans, on the other hand, made pleasure the end of life, and therefore sought the gratification of the senses. But neither school found the solution of the problem. Although the Stoics lived

nobler lives, many of them died by their own hand, finding life unendurable ; while the Epicureans, who made pleasure their end, in the efforts to find pleasure that would really satisfy, always failed.

II. Man finds a means of satisfying every other appetite except this soul-thirst. But surely the existence of an appetite implies the possibility of its satisfaction, for we cannot conceive of a desire without its object—of hunger without food. So that the existence of the soul-thirst would seem to imply that there must be something which can satisfy it. Has any other solution to the difficulty been proposed? Yes, one other—the Christian answer to the problem—that man was made for GOD. As S. Augustine puts it, “Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless until it rests in Thee.” Christianity teaches that GOD is man’s true end, and, as in all other appetites, that in seeking this end, satisfaction is given as a reward.

If we appeal to various classes of men—to the Stoic, to the Epicurean, to the man who seeks happiness in power, or knowledge, or excitement, or sin—all alike confess that they have not found satisfaction or happiness, that they have not assuaged the soul’s thirst! We turn to the Christian saint in any age of the Church’s life, and he assures us that he has found GOD’s promises fulfilled, that in GOD he has found all that his nature craves, that he can say to GOD, what the ruler of the feast at Cana of Galilee said to the bridegroom, “Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine ; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse : but *Thou* hast kept the good wine until now.”¹

The Christian saint tells us that the world gives the good wine first ; and afterwards when men have well drunk, then that which is worse ; that the world gives its best first, but

¹S. John ii. 10.

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that its pleasures soon lose their power of satisfying ; whereas, while all GOD's gifts are good, experience shows that each new gift is better than the last, until GOD gives the Supreme Gift of Himself, and in the possession of that Gift, in union with GOD, man finds the thirst of his soul satisfied, the happiness of his life made perfect !

But it may be objected that there are many Christians who are unhappy, who are not satisfied ; that this is the case, probably, with the majority, that it is only the few, only the Christian *saint* who experiences the satisfaction which every man craves for. Why is this ? The answer surely is simple—because so few Christians fulfil the conditions of Christ's service, so few obey His Commandments. The very essence of Christianity is an undivided service of GOD, for our Lord says, "No man can serve two masters : . . . Ye cannot serve GOD and mammon." ¹

The reason that so many who call themselves Christians have not found the satisfaction which Christianity promises, is because they have not fulfilled the condition which it exacts—complete self-surrender, the giving of self to GOD, that GOD may give Himself to us.

Can we wonder for a moment that the imperfect fulfilment of Christian obligation leads to disappointment ? Indeed, the Christian who is trying to serve both the world and Christ, has an *unhappiness* which is peculiarly his own, for he gives up much for Christianity and practises self-restraint in many ways ; but because he does not give up *all* to find All, not only is the thirst of his soul not quenched, but his conscience is constantly reproaching him.

The very Scriptures, on which he should feed, reprove such a man by their living words ; the very Master, in Whose presence he should love to live, is the Master Whom he is

¹ S. Matt. vi. 24.

conscious of offending and crucifying in his daily life. But where can you find a Christian who has taken GOD at His word, and who has not found GOD as good as His promise! Where can you show one who has *consistently* followed Christ, who has not found in Him the satisfaction of his soul's desire!

III. But to return to Isaiah. We may notice, first, the universality of GOD's invitation, "Ho, every one that thirsteth." The exclamation "Ho" is to attract the attention of those who are at a distance, while the persons addressed include all who *thirst*, that is, all who realize that they have not found in the world what their soul cries for.

Those who are satisfied with the world and its pleasures, as some are in the earlier experiences of their life, who do not know this thirst, will not recognize, of course, the invitation, but to those who are seeking to satisfy the cravings of their nature, GOD addresses the call, "Come ye to the waters."

But there is another characteristic indicated in those who are invited, in the words, "he that hath no money." They must not only be thirsty, conscious of their need of GOD, but they must be *poor*, realizing that they can do nothing of themselves, that they have no claim upon GOD, but through His love, that it is their very poverty that insures to them His grace; for Christ said, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

But while the gift is free to all who feel their need, it has its condition—they must *come*, they must accept the invitation; the will of man must co-operate with the grace of GOD. GOD offers them His favour, but does not over-ride their free will. They must make their own choice, reach their own decision, and act upon it, by coming in response to GOD's call, and then they shall receive the fulness of His grace.

They do not *first* come to GOD. All first motions of grace are from GOD; He invites, He calls first, and then man responds;

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then man comes to GOD to receive His abundant blessing.

“He that hath no money; come ye, buy . . . without money and without price.” All GOD’s spiritual gifts to man are freely given, they are so precious that man could never purchase them; and it is in realizing this, and in glorying in his dependence upon GOD, that man renders himself capable of receiving the richest graces.

“Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not?” When we examine our life we see how much of our substance, how much of our time, how much of our strength, has been spent in that which can be of no permanent value to us, which gave us, at the best, only a passing satisfaction, which left us hungry and thirsty still! Why, then, should we go on spending ourselves and being spent in that which is of no value? Why should we strive for that which is not bread, which, though it looks like bread, has not the property of nourishing our soul, of satisfying our hunger?

Let us listen to GOD’s gracious invitation, “Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters.” Let us take GOD at His word. We must trust Him first for our pardon—that according to His gracious promises, if we repent and use the means of grace, He will pardon all our sins. And then more, that through the Holy Communion He will give us bread for the rest of our journey, the bread of the soul, the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which we receive strength to meet the difficulties of the present, and if we seek it in daily prayer, the gift of perseverance for the future.

The gift of grace is free, yet it has conditions. There must be real penitence, real trust in GOD, real self-surrender; and then will come true love, the thirst of the soul will be satisfied, the restless mind will find its satisfaction in the knowledge of GOD, and the restless heart in loving GOD.

Sermon XXII.

THE FIRST DISCIPLES.

(The Second Sunday after Epiphany.)

S. JOHN I. 37, 43, 45.

“And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.” “The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me.” “Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found Him, of Whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph.”

IN the latter part of the first chapter of S. John's Gospel we have the account of the call of our Lord's first five disciples, S. Andrew and S. John, S. Peter, S. Philip, and S. Nathanael. In addition to the interest which centres around the first followers of Jesus Christ, it behooves us to consider that these men, while chosen on account of their special fitness for Christ's work, were but men like ourselves, and that the circumstances of their call were typical of Christ's similar dealings with individuals in our own times. They fall into three distinct classes, the two who sought our Lord—S. Andrew and S. John—the one whom our Lord sought—S. Philip—and the two who were brought to Christ by the influence of friends who had themselves already come to know Him.

It has been truly said that the Gospel is a drama for all time, and that its actors live on in the Christian life of every age! In studying, therefore, the circumstances and striving to understand the principles upon which our Lord acted in the call of these men, we may see what is going on among ourselves, we may recognize perhaps the very experiences of our

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own lives, and we may at least learn some of the conditions of spiritual life which bring men to Christ.

I. S. Andrew and his companion—who was almost certainly S. John the Evangelist—were, like the others, disciples in the school of S. John Baptist, but of greater spiritual perception and more aggressive spiritual courage than the rest. All alike were expecting the coming of the Messiah, of Whom S. John Baptist taught so clearly. But these were not content to wait after their master had indicated that the Messiah had already come.

They are typical seekers after truth, men who, while patient in waiting when there is nothing else to be done, are ever ready to take the initiative when some new path is to be explored or some new truth to be followed. Realizing that a satisfaction of the soul's thirst is the most important of all pursuits, like the pearl merchant in the parable, they are ever seeking goodly pearls, ever ready to follow up all clues which may lead them at last to the object of their quest—the one Pearl of great price.

No sooner had S. John Baptist for the second time uttered the startling proclamation, "Behold the Lamb of God, Which taketh away the sin of the world," than, detaching themselves from their master, they followed Christ.

The story then graphically describes our Lord as turning and asking them abruptly the question, "What seek ye?" This question may well have a wider application than is generally given it; for we may take it as a question addressed by Christ to every man, a challenge to each of us to consider what is the object of our life—to ask ourselves, What am I seeking? What is the end I have before me?

There are many who have never really faced this question. They live from year to year, carried along in different directions by the various currents into which their life happens to

be drawn, constantly changing the object of their life, and living for no worthy end.

If we could arrest a number of representative men on the street and ask them this question, and compel them to reply truly, what would be their answers? What are you seeking in life? Perhaps the majority would say, To make money. Some who are very poor might reply, Simply to obtain means to exist. Others would answer, To win fame. Others again, To obtain social or political success. Others, To be popular. And yet others would have to confess themselves mere pleasure-seekers.

If we were further to examine them in regard to the testimony of the human race at large, whether these pursuits really lead to happiness, they would have to admit that all the evidence of experience bears witness to the fact that, with respect to happiness, they fail in two important points—that they none of them last, and that they none of them satisfy the cravings of the soul.

This testimony is indisputable. And yet, while all men accept it as such in theory, a great majority seem to think that what has led in others to failure will in their own case lead to success; and that where others have found only disappointment they will find satisfaction and happiness.

But is there no other object which men can make the quest of their lives?—There is one, and one only, which can satisfy. It is described by the Psalmist thus, “My soul thirsteth for GOD, for the living GOD.”¹ When our Lord turns to us and challenges us to answer His question, “What seek ye?” there is but one answer which is worthy of us, and it is, We seek Thee; “Master, where dwellest Thou?” We seek to know, that we may abide with Thee.

But we must not give this answer unless it be true. We

¹ Psalm xliiii. 2.

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must not say that Christ is the object of our search, if we do not really mean it. There is, thank God; the evidence of numbers who have made Christ the object of their life's pursuit, and have left us the testimony that they found in Him the satisfaction of all their desires.

Let us now observe our Lord's answer to their question, "Where dwellest Thou?" He says, "Come and see." He invites them to a personal knowledge of Himself, a personal investigation of His claims. They accept His invitation; they come, they see; and it results in their abiding with Him. Happy is the soul which follows their example!

II. But let us pass to the second class. "The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow Me." This Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter, and doubtless, like them, had been trained in the school of the Baptist to expect the advent of the Messiah. He seems, however, to have differed from them, both in temperament and in spiritual perception. They were ready to take the initiative in seeking Christ. He, on the other hand, waited for Christ to seek him. And in the light which is thrown on his character by the episode recorded in the 14th chapter of S. John, he seems to have been slow to comprehend either our Lord's Person or teaching. When our Lord said, "No man cometh unto the Father, but by Me. If ye had known Me, ye should have known My Father also: and from henceforth ye know Him, and have seen Him." Philip replied, "Lord, shew us the Father and it sufficeth us." And Jesus rebuked him, saying reproachfully, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?"¹

¹S. John xiv. 6-10.

S. Philip, then, was of that class of men who are slow in taking any decisive step upon themselves, and who need that Christ in His love should seek them, find them, and call them to follow Him.

There are two sorts of *finding*. There is the casual stumbling on a thing which we are not looking for; and there is a finding which is the result of seeking. Our Lord's finding of S. Philip was no accident. He went with the purpose of seeking Philip. Suddenly He, as it were, laid His hand upon him and spoke the magic words, "Follow Me."

But, though our Lord in His wondrous love seeks those who are not seeking Him, there must be on their part a response to His call; a right decision, when they are brought face to face with the choice of following Him or staying behind. They must correspond by their action to the call of grace. How many excuses, however, Satan supplies to such men for putting off their decision, or at least for delaying to act upon it; with the result that the opportunity often passes, the call is lost, Christ passes on, and they are left behind in their worldliness.

III. There is a third class represented by S. Peter and S. Nathanael: the one brought to Christ by his brother Andrew, the other by his friend Philip. S. Peter apparently was ready at once to believe, and to come to Christ; Nathanael, while perhaps not less ready, found a difficulty in Philip's description of Christ as "Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph," which he expresses in the question, "Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?" We know that S. Philip's description was misleading, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, and that He was the Son of Mary, not of Joseph. But Philip wisely declines to argue, and simply suggests personal investigation, "Come and see."

How wise S. Philip was! How little good, as a rule, comes of argument; how much from personal investigation of the

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claims of Christ, from personal experience of His power!

And what are we to come and see?—three things.

1. What Christ is. Study the Gospels, and you will see that He is Divine; not the Son of Joseph, but the Son of GOD!

2. What Christ has done for other souls. Read the lives of the saints, and you will find out the wonders of grace which He has wrought in souls which have yielded themselves to Him.

3. What Christ will do for you. This we must learn from what He has done for others. And then, coming to Him as others have come, hope will pass into experience, and you will join the multitude of Christ's followers, proclaiming Him as your Master, your Saviour, and your GOD.

Sermon XXIII.

THE ACTIVITIES OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN.

(The Third Sunday after Epiphany.)

ISAIAH LXII. 1, 2, 6, 7.

"For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth. And the Gentiles shall see thy righteousness, and all kings thy glory. . . . I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night; ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."



WHO is the speaker of these words? Some have thought the Prophet Isaiah himself, others God, others "the Servant," Messiah. Certainly not the first, not Isaiah; probably the last, the Messiah, as most in accordance with the speaker in the previous

❧ The Activities of the Kingdom of Heaven.

chapter, with the context of this chapter, and with what we know of our Lord's office as Intercessor and Mediator between God and man.

I. In the first verse Messiah tells of His care for Zion, that is, for the Jewish Church. "I will not hold My peace, . . . I will not rest," until that is accomplished which is God's purpose for Zion, until "the righteousness thereof go forth . . . and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth." God's purpose for Zion was to train her as a nation and as a Church in such righteousness that she should be a light to the rest of the world, that the Gentiles should see her righteousness and come to her light. This was the meaning of God's election of His chosen people. Their election was a great privilege, but like all privileges it carried with it a great responsibility, to be the light to lighten the world. And so loving is God's interest in the fulfilment of that purpose, in Zion's perfection, that Messiah here says, For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness shines forth as a lamp that burneth. What an encouragement to the Jews in the time of their distress, when Isaiah wrote this! God cares for them, and promises to take no rest until their destiny is accomplished.

In the sixth verse our attention is drawn to the means which Messiah uses to carry out this purpose: "I have set watchmen upon thy walls, O Jerusalem, which shall never hold their peace day nor night: ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give Him no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth."

Watchmen on the walls! Who are they? Some have thought angels; others, prophets and priests. Perhaps we may include all these as set upon the walls by God to watch over the city. But what are they to do? They are "never to hold their peace day nor night," and those of them who are

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especially "the Lord's remembrancers" are to give GOD "no rest, till He establish, and till He make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." That is, till Jerusalem fulfils her true office, in being a light, and therefore a blessing to the whole world.

The watchmen have a work to do towards the inhabitants of the city. They are to warn them of approaching danger, they are to instruct them in GOD's law, and they are to exhort them to holy living. But they have also a work to do especially towards GOD; they are to give Him no rest till He establish Jerusalem. Their work here is evidently the work of intercession. Day and night they are to offer up perpetual prayer before GOD's Throne.

What a strong expression Isaiah uses! They are to give GOD no rest. It reminds us of our Lord's two parables, of the friend at midnight, and of the unjust judge.

In the first the conclusion is, "I say unto you, Though he will not rise and give him, because he is his friend, yet because of his importunity he will rise and give him as many as he needeth. And I say unto you, Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."¹

In the second we read, "He spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."²

II. What a wonderful picture of the interests of heaven in the Church on earth we have in this passage of Isaiah! And if this be a description of the activities of the Church of the old Covenant, how much more is it a description of those of the new! Here we learn what the expression in our All Saints' Collect means—"Knit together in one communion and fellowship." It means a common interest in earth and heaven in the perfection of the whole body of Christ, and a common work, the work of intercession.

¹S. Luke xi. 5-10.

²S. Luke xviii. 1.

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“For Jerusalem’s sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness.” This reminds us of S. Paul’s revelation of Christ’s love for His Church. He says, “Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it; that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”¹

Christ’s purpose for the Church is that it should be holy and without blemish; to express it in the language of Isaiah, that its righteousness should shine forth as a lamp that burneth, and that the nations, the heathen, should see it. The election of the Jews as GOD’S chosen people has passed to the Christian Church, and the work which the Jews did only partially in converting the world, has been transferred to us by Christ, in Whom was summed up and fulfilled the election of the Church of the old covenant, and Who left to us the command, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature.”²

III. We learn from this prophecy of Isaiah, and indeed from all the teaching of our Blessed Lord, that the means to be employed in this great work of converting the world are chiefly two; towards GOD, the work of intercession; towards man, the example of righteousness.

I. *Towards God*, the work of intercession is the means by which the world is to be converted. This is carried on both in heaven and on earth. In heaven, Christ “ever liveth to make intercession for us.”³ This is the one continuous work of our Lord in His life in glory, and He has provided that the Church on earth should share in this work.

Isaiah’s expression, “Ye that are the Lord’s remem-

¹ Ephes. v. 25-28.

² S. Mark xvi. 15.

³ Cf. Rom. viii. 34; Heb. vii. 25; Heb. ix. 24.

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brancers,"¹ accurately describes the work of the Christian Priesthood in offering upon the Altars of the Church, to God the Father, the Memorial of the death of His dear Son, "the perpetual memory of that His precious death until His coming again," which Christ Himself "did institute, and in His Holy Gospel command us to continue."

This was the first purpose for which the Holy Eucharist was instituted, for our Catechism, in answer to the question "Why was the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper ordained?" teaches us to answer, "For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby."

The gift of our Lord's Body and Blood to be our food and sustenance in the Holy Communion, is, according to the teaching of our Catechism, only the secondary purpose, although this is of immense value, and indeed of absolute necessity for our salvation. But the Eucharist is a sacrifice as well as a Sacrament, and its sacrificial aspect consists simply in this, that it is a reminding God of the death of His dear Son.

The offering of the Holy Eucharist by the priests of God's Church is the fulfilment of the prophecy in the text, that the watchmen upon the walls of Jerusalem shall never hold their peace day nor night; for on account of the change of time caused by the earth's revolution upon its axis, there is not one minute, day nor night, when in some spot on this earth the Holy Eucharist is not being offered, and this offering is the Church's special act of union with our Lord's intercession.

We must remember, however, that the work of the "Lord's remembrancers" is not confined to the priesthood, for there is a priesthood of the laity, and it is their privilege and responsibility to join in this work of intercession, in this offering of the Holy Eucharist. What dignity is ours, to be privileged

¹ Cf. A.V. Margin.

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to take part in this act of power! The whole Church, the whole body, joins in the great work of intercession. The Head, Christ, "ever liveth to make intercession for us." The feet, the Church militant (that part of Christ's Body which is still walking this earth), have their share in the work of intercession; while the saints in glory, the Church triumphant, the greatest part of Christ's Body (since they comprise all the faithful who have been made perfect from the time of Adam until our own day), are united with us in this function.

These are the activities of the kingdom of heaven; this is the work of the Church of Christ, perpetual prayer, unwearied intercession, giving GOD no rest until His purpose is fulfilled and the Church attains to that measure of righteousness which shall enable her to accomplish her work in the world, and shall prepare her for her life in eternity! "Knit together in one communion and fellowship in the mystical Body of Christ." How often we have heard these words in the Collect for All Saints' Day! Have we realized all that they imply?

2. *Towards man*, the means by which the world is to be converted, is the example of righteousness.

In the prophecy Messiah says, "For Jerusalem's sake I will not rest until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth," and the Church's great duty is to train men who shall bring up her children in righteousness, first for their own salvation, and then that they may help in converting the world. This is precisely the teaching of our Lord in the Sermon on the Mount, "Ye are the light of the world . . . Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father Which is in Heaven."¹ And again, in S. Luke, "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning."²

But this work of giving light to the world around us is, in

¹ S. Matt. v. 16.

² S. Luke xii. 35.

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a very wonderful way, a work in which our Blessed Lord is the true Worker, for He says of Himself, "I am the Light of the world."¹ And in the passage "Let your loins be girded about, and your lights burning," the word translated "lights" is really "lamps" (λῦχνοι). We are the lamps, the light-holders; Christ is the Light, our Light, the Light which must shine forth in us, if we are to convert the world. Christ is the righteousness imparted to us through the Sacraments, and woven into our very character by acts of our will corresponding with grace.

This is also brought before us in a very striking way in two other passages; for though our Lord "sitteth on the right Hand of God the Father Almighty," yet S. John saw Him in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, which represent His presence in the Churches.

Again, though He sent forth His disciples to do His work in the world, yet in the commission, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you,"² the very word He uses for "send" (πέμπω) implies that He goes with them. Indeed, He says also in S. Matthew, "Go . . . teach all nations," but adds, "Lo, I am with you alway."³

What a comfort to think that in all the Church's work she has not only her Master's commission, but her Master's presence, as in the command to her to "Arise" and "shine,"⁴ she is to shine not with her own light, but with His.

IV. What a different view of the Church and her work is this from the view ordinarily taken by the world! The Church's power and work we see, therefore, does not depend upon organization or adaptability. This has been, and is perhaps even now, the heresy of our age—organization run wild, until in many parishes all life is organized out of the

¹ S. John viii. 12.

² S. John xx. 21.

³ S. Matt. xxviii. 19, 20.

⁴ Isaiah lx. 1.

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parish; there are societies with managers, and meetings, and reports, and statistics, as if the Church was to be run like a railway or a bank!

And then another class of persons assures us that what the Church needs, in order to do her work to-day, is adaptability. She needs to adapt—some people tell us—her doctrines to the thought of the twentieth century. She needs to conform her standard of conduct to the morals of the twentieth century. This means, in plain English, that such people would have us, in order to win the world, water down GOD'S truth to make it acceptable to an unbelieving age, and relax the morals of the Sermon on the Mount so as to admit into Christian society the products of the divorce court.

Yet another class would have us adapt our sermons to modern conditions, to make them as interesting and sensational as a Sunday newspaper. We find, however, no suggestion of organization or adaptability as the means by which the world was to be won to GOD, in the Prophecy of Isaiah, or in the teachings of Jesus Christ, or, for the matter of that, in the practice of the early Church.

Two things, and two only, are put before us as the great activities of the kingdom of heaven—the one, intercession, continual prayer; the other, the shining of the light of righteousness, which is produced by holiness of life. How was the world converted by the Church in the first centuries of her life? Not by organization, not by adaptability, not by sensational preaching; but by prayer and righteousness!

In those days there was very little preaching, very little opportunity for it; indeed, for several centuries only the bishop preached. There was careful instruction in Christian doctrine, and a stern requirement of Christian life. The sermons were few, and were listened to with attention, and carried into practice. The present method of only listening

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when they are interesting, and afterwards criticizing instead of practising what they teach, is easier and perhaps more pleasant, but less salutary, less in accord with the example of Christianity in its purest days.

Let us go back to the old paths, and strive to realize our privilege and responsibility, our privilege of exercising our fellowship in the activities of the kingdom of heaven by constant intercession, especially in the offering of the Holy Eucharist, and our responsibility for the shining of the light which is in us upon that little corner of the world in which our life is spent.

Sermon XXIV.

THE CALL TO THE MINISTRY OF CHRIST. ✓

(The Third Sunday after Epiphany.)

S. MATTHEW IV. 18-22.

"And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And He saith unto them, Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed Him. And going on from thence, He saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him."



O some persons it has seemed a serious difficulty that three certainly, if not all four, of these disciples had been called by our Lord on a previous occasion, as recorded in the first chapter of S. John, and such have seen here a discrepancy between the records of

the two Evangelists. So far, however, from there being any discrepancy, the two calls are necessary and mutually complementary; and the fact that they are both recorded is deeply instructive.

I. The first call, that mentioned by S. John in the first chapter of his Gospel, was a call to discipleship, to become a follower of Christ; the second, recorded in our text, was to become a worker for Christ, an evangelist, a missionary, a fisher of men. In the former we see how Christ first calls men to Himself; in the latter how He afterwards sends them to minister to others. The call to Christ must come before the call to work; for we must give ourselves unreservedly to Christ before we can give our work acceptably to Him.

One of the most grievous mistakes of our own age is that men can work for Christ before they have given themselves to Him. It was not so in the early ages of Christianity, when a handful of Christians converted the world.

In those days men first sought Christ and found Him; came and saw where He dwelt, and abode with Him; pondered on His teachings, drank in His very life, fed upon His Body and Blood; and when they had so become one with Him, that they were endowed with the full powers of His grace, and were on fire with His love, they went forth as His ministers to proclaim Him Whom they knew in the most intimate personal knowledge of their soul's life. They went forth to teach about Him Whom they loved with all the fervour of which their nature was capable; and, if need be, to seal their testimony with their blood. And so they converted the world; the fire of love was lighted in their hearts, and the conflagration spread; other hearts took fire from them; and the love of Christ reigned among Christians!

How different it all is now. How little of self-consecration, how little real drinking in of Christian truth because our souls

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are thirsting for it. Men to-day take up the ministry of Christ as a profession; and prepare for it, not with a view to winning souls to God, but to winning success for themselves, to gaining the honours and emoluments of the ministry.

Work for souls is organized in our day on much the same principles as any secular business, and with about the same spiritual results. The work is highly organized upon lines which ought to produce worldly success, and often does, but with absolute disregard of the principles of ministry,—self-consecration and personal conviction of the claims of Christ upon the minister; with entire absence of that spirit of self-sacrificing love which is the secret of all power in winning souls to Christ.

II. We may observe that the call to be a Christian does not interfere with honest work in the world; for labour has a dignity of its own, and is man's duty in his present state. We find, therefore, apparently in every case, that after their first call the disciples went back to their work. S. Andrew and S. Peter, S. James and S. John, received their second call when pursuing their ordinary labours as fishermen. And in the last chapter of S. John we read that after our Lord's resurrection, when, according to His command, the disciples were waiting for His manifestation in Galilee,¹ Peter and Thomas and Nathanael, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of His disciples, returned to their work as fishermen; and it was while they were labouring at this that our Lord revealed Himself to them through the miraculous draught of fishes.

We may learn then from this that a period of waiting should never be a period of idleness; that when we are waiting for some further manifestation of Christ's purposes, there is always work for us to do.

This is a most important lesson; for there are many, who, because they are not sure about the great vocation of their

¹ Cf. S. Matt. xxviii. 10.

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life, the life-work to which Christ has called them, neglect the lesser vocations; these leave undone the duties of the present, whilst they are waiting for a revelation of the work for the future. Nothing can be clearer, both from our Lord's words and from His actions in the Gospel, than that our true vocation—that is, the revelation of God's purpose for us—comes generally to those who are at work, not to those who are in idleness.

It was to S. Andrew and S. Peter, as they were casting their net into the sea, that our Lord said, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." It was when S. James and S. John were mending their nets that our Lord called them to leave all and follow Him. It was when S. Matthew was engaged in his business at the receipt of custom, that Christ said, "Follow Me." And it has almost always been in the industrious fulfilment of daily duty, that the message has come to call men to higher works for Christ.

III. We may notice the twofold character of our Lord's call, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." It is, as we have already observed, first to follow Christ; afterwards to win souls. We must follow Christ ourselves before we can persuade others to follow Him. We must live the life of Christians before we shall be able to influence the world to accept that life.

And we are further taught that the ministerial vocation demands self-sacrifice. Worldly possessions and earthly affections have to be surrendered. S. Peter and S. Andrew left their nets and followed Christ. S. James and S. John not only left their nets and their ship, but their father also. The secret of success in winning souls to Christ is self-sacrifice. If we have made no surrender of worldly goods or earthly affections to follow Christ, how can we call upon others to do so?

Again, we may notice the promptness with which our Lord's

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call was obeyed. Of S. Andrew and S. Peter we read that "they straightway left their nets, and followed Him"; of S. James and S. John, that "they immediately left the ship and their father and followed Him."

There is a proverb that "Delay is dangerous." It is certainly true in regard to vocation. Christ calls us and passes on, that we may follow Him. If we delay to make our decision, if we put off following Him, He may pass on without us, and our vocation to the ministry may be lost.

These disciples were to leave one business for another, secular affairs for things spiritual. They *were* fishers; they were to *become* fishers of men. And surely there is something implied in the analogy here. Instead of gaining their living by the death of God's creatures, their fishing is to result in saving the life of their fellow-men. Instead of dragging fishes out of the element in which they *can* live, into that in which they *must* die, they are to transfer men out of the waters of worldliness—the element in which they are dying—into the atmosphere in which alone they can truly live.

Lastly, we may observe that their new vocation, as well as that which they are leaving, requires skill. How much skill is needed to be a good fisherman! In their old vocation they had to know thoroughly the lake and the habits of the different fish which it contained. They had to find out what baits were most attractive to the fish. They had to judge of the weather and time best adapted to their work; to learn how to manage their boats and their nets. In a word, the most successful fisherman is the one who most thoroughly understands his business; and that cannot be learned in a day.

May we not apply the same principles to the greatest of all sciences, the science of souls? If it needs skill to catch fish, does it need no skill to catch men? Satan angles with wonder-

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ful art for souls, adapts his bait exactly to the taste of each individual, takes into consideration all the conditions and circumstances which are likely to lead to success. And are we to neglect such things? The training for the ministry should, above all things, be a training in the knowledge of souls, of their difficulties, of their temptations, of their possibilities. A physician studies the diseases of the body, and learns what remedy is best for each. And the Christian priest should study the diseases of the soul, how to apply the remedies which Christ has provided in His infinite love. Some people would call this "priestcraft," and would condemn it because of this name. But surely, if priestcraft means skill in dealing with souls, in helping them to escape from sin, and in winning them to GOD, the more priestcraft we have of this sort the better.

We may learn much from these few verses in regard to GOD's call to the ministry of the Church; and a prayerful study of them might enable some to hear Christ's voice saying to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Sermon XXV.

JOB'S PERPLEXITY.

(The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.)

✓
JOB XXVII. 5, 6.

"GOD forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

IN the whole range of literature the Book of Job ranks as one of the most sublime productions, grand—not only in its diction and poetry, but as a marvellous drama of human life, in which is presented and discussed the mystery of suffering and its cause.

I. In the opening chapters of the book Job is introduced to us as a man of great wealth and high rank, noted for his deep piety and perfect life. He is living surrounded by his family, prosperous and happy, respected and beloved.

Then the veil is lifted, and we are permitted to see what is going on in the spirit world. Satan on a certain day presents himself before GOD, and his attention being directed to Job as "a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth GOD, and escheweth evil,"¹ he boldly asserts that Job's piety and uprightness is only another form of calculating selfishness. In the question, "Doth Job fear God for nought?"² Satan challenges Job's unselfishness, and suggests that, as GOD has lavished upon him prosperity and blessing, Job is pious and upright because it is the best policy; that his motive is not GOD's glory, but his own advantage.

Then Satan goes on to assert that if Job were stripped of

¹ Job i. 8.

² i. 9.

his possessions, deprived of his children, and afflicted in his own body, he would curse GOD. GOD permits Satan to make the trial, only preserving Job's life.

We are all familiar with the story of Job's afflictions—first, the loss of all his property and his children. This results in Satan's discomfiture, for Job utters the sublime words, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."¹ Satan next proceeds to afflict Job with the most loathsome and painful disease. To this Job only answers, "What? shall we receive good at the hand of GOD, and shall we not receive evil?"²

At this point Job's three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, having heard of his affliction, come to mourn with him and to comfort him. In a series of dialogues, beginning with the third chapter, and ending with the twenty-sixth, these three friends, with more or less harshness, account for Job's afflictions by accusing him of grievous sin. Really, they make him out a hypocrite, his life of piety and uprightness a sham. Their theory, which was the theory of the Jews even in the time of our Lord, is that all suffering and misfortune is the direct punishment of individual sin; and therefore, that one, afflicted so sorely as Job, must have upon his conscience some grievous secret sin. For this reason they bend all their energies to exhorting him to humble himself and confess this sin, that GOD may have mercy upon him and remove from him the punishment, and restore to him his former prosperity.

Job asserts his integrity, and rejects their theory of suffering. All the parties to the argument become more or less heated, and Job himself uses language which he afterwards retracts. This dialogue ends with the twenty-sixth chapter, in which Job briefly replies to the last speech of Bildad.

II. After waiting, apparently, to see if Zophar desires to

¹ Job i. 21.

² ii. 10.

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speak in his turn, Job in the twenty-seventh chapter begins his "Apologia." In it he re-asserts his integrity, and rejects indignantly the theories of his three friends in regard to the cause of his sufferings. He retracts his own hasty language about GOD's apparent injustice in allowing the wicked to flourish, acknowledging GOD's greatness, might, and inscrutableness, and vindicates himself from the aspersions of his opponents.

We are concerned this morning with only the first division of Job's defence, the first six verses of the chapter which we have read as the Old Testament lesson for the day. In this we have brought before us Job's perplexity—on the one hand, his own misery and suffering, and his friends' theories with regard to that suffering, the popular theories of his day; on the other hand, his own conscience, void of offence, witnessing to him that those theories are not true in his case, and therefore, probably, may not be true in other cases.

The temptation with Job was to acquiesce in the popular view of suffering as urged so vehemently by his three friends, to confess a guilt which he did not feel, to acknowledge a burden of sin upon his soul, of which he was not conscious. Thus he might have satisfied his friends, fulfilled what was expected of him by the popular religious views of his time, and made the experiment at least of obtaining from GOD in this way relief from his misery.

By doing so, Job felt he would be violating his own conscience; for he would have been accepting a theory which he knew was not true in his own case; he would have been professing the false humility of a penitence which he did not feel; and, so far from honouring GOD, would have dishonoured Him by attributing to Him qualities which were inconsistent with his own moral sense.

Now let us consider precisely what position Job takes. He

begins his defence with a solemn adjuration of GOD. He says, "As GOD liveth, Who hath taken away my judgment; and the Almighty, Who hath vexed my soul." We must observe that the word translated "taken away" might be better rendered "withheld"; that is, that GOD had declined to enter with him into a controversy as to the justice of His doings. It is not, as some might suppose, an arraignment of GOD's justice, only a statement that GOD has declined to justify His acts; that is, to give reasons for His dealings with Job. The Almighty, he says, has vexed his soul, or made it bitter. But this does not imply distrust of GOD, as we shall see in what follows. It is uttered in the spirit of his former act of faith, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."¹ "All the while my breath is in me," should be rendered, "For my life is yet whole within me"—"and the spirit of GOD is in my nostrils."

This verse is merely a solemn assertion that Job is in the possession of all his faculties, and therefore that what he is about to utter is to be regarded, not as the ravings of one crazed by suffering, but as the deliberate statements of a sane man. "My lips shall not speak wickedness, nor my tongue utter deceit. God forbid that I should justify you: till I die I will not remove mine integrity from me. My righteousness I hold fast, and will not let it go: my heart shall not reproach me so long as I live."

Here we have, following a confession of deep perplexity, a resolution at least to be true and sincere to the end. "God forbid that I should justify you" implies that, if Job were to accept the explanation of his sufferings offered by his friends, he would be untrue to every conviction of his own soul. He may have to *suffer* to the end, but he will not add to his sufferings the burden of conscious insincerity. He cannot

¹ Job xiii. 15.

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explain the mystery of God's dealing with him, but he can reject what he knows is an untrue explanation. In reiterating his own moral rectitude Job does not mean that he is exempt from all sin; for he acknowledges "iniquities of his youth"¹ and frequent sins of infirmity.² But he maintains that he has not sinned in the way his friends imply, by wilful guilt; that he has not fallen away from God; that God has really been and still is his God, the Object of his affections, of his worship, his true End, the God Whom he trusts; and that he is not conscious of any sin unrepented of which could come between him and God, or could be the just cause of his present miseries.

III. Without entering on the mysterious question of the mystery of suffering as related to the mystery of evil, we may surely learn a really valuable lesson from these opening words of Job's defence—the lesson of sincerity in religious profession.

There is a temptation which does not come upon many men, but does befall some, and those sometimes among the most upright—the temptation to perplexity; and this, not so much about the doctrines of the Faith, as about the mysteries of God's providence, about the manifestation of God's justice in the strange inequalities of human life, in the sufferings of the godly, in the prosperity of the wicked. Of this temptation Job is a most striking example. How does he meet it?

1. He meets it first by perfect resignation to God's Will. "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the Name of the Lord."³ "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?"⁴ "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."⁵ In these and other passages Job expresses his perfect faith in God. There is no wavering of faith, no want of trust in his soul.

¹ Cf. Job xiii. 26.

² Cf. Job vii. 20, 21; x. 14; xiii. 23; xiv. 16, 17.

³ Job i. 21.

⁴ ii. 10.

⁵ xiii. 15.

2. Then he meets it by honest recognition of the difficulty and mystery of God's providence, of God's dealings with himself and others.

3. Thirdly, by indignant rejection of theories which his own moral sense assures him are not true, by a refusal to accept the popular views of the mystery of suffering, by taking the ground that, if GOD has not revealed the reasons of His actions, if God's ways are inscrutable, he will trust GOD; but he will not accept explanations which violate his own conscience, he will not pretend to believe theories which he does not believe.

4. And finally, he meets it by holding fast his righteousness to the end; his heart shall not reproach him as long as he lives. If he cannot understand the mystery of suffering, he can understand the obligation to be sincere and true in his own moral life. If there are questions in speculative theology for which he can see no answer, he can at least observe the great precept of moral theology—that "it is never right to do wrong." Therefore he resolves that he will persevere, GOD helping him, to the end in the path of rectitude; that he will not, because he has perplexities in the region of faith, on this account give up striving to do his duty in the sphere of morals.

All these points are well worthy the serious consideration of those who, like Job, are perplexed by the mystery of suffering in this world. No lesson is more valuable than the last, that we should at least preserve integrity and sincerity, that we should hold fast righteousness, and not let it go; for a life of integrity is the best preparation for the gift of faith.

Sermon XXVI.

THE FACULTY OF SPEECH. ✓

(The Fourth Sunday after Epiphany.)

S. LUKE IV. 22.

“And all bare Him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph’s Son?”

THIS is the first criticism on the words of our Lord recorded in the Gospels, and when His last words were uttered, the same Evangelist, S. Luke, records the last criticism, that of the centurion at the Cross, “Certainly this was a righteous Man.”¹

I. We have here brought before us, as a subject for our serious consideration, our Lord’s influence through speech.

1. When a Child of twelve years of age, in the temple, His words filled the doctors with astonishment. And these were not men like our Lord’s Galilæan audiences, liable to be easily influenced by words; they were all of them learned, most of them aged, but they were astonished at the words of Jesus.

2. When the officers were sent to seize Him what sword did He use? “The sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God”;² and the officers returned without Him, bearing witness, “Never man spake like this Man.”³ Such was the impression He produced upon those sent to take Him prisoner; they could not execute their orders, they returned to their superiors, and the excuse they gave was this, “Never man spake like this Man.”

3. Again, when Judas with the Roman cohort, and the

¹ S. Luke xxiii. 47.

² Eph. vi. 17.

³ S. John vii. 46.

officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, entered the Garden of Gethsemane for the purpose of arresting our Lord, what made those soldiers retreat, go backwards and fall to the ground? Apparently, the words "I am."¹

Here, then, we have five independent testimonies to the effect of our Lord's words upon those that heard them, and from these and many other instances we learn that it was by the power of speech that Christ was pleased to wield His supremacy over men.

But not only was this the case when Christ was upon earth, but even now His words have lost none of their force, they are living words still, touching men's hearts, reaching men's consciences, and influencing men's lives; for to-day Christians probably study the utterances of Christ even more than they do His actions, and frame their code of morals more from what our Lord said than from what He did; and most of us, as we ponder the wonderful words of Christ, can add our judgment to that of the officers, "Never man spake like this Man."

Speech is the great instrument for influence among men. I do not forget that there are two other sources of influence—what a man does, and what a man is—but the chief *instrument* is undoubtedly speech; for if it be sincere it reveals what we are, manifests our character, our very selves, to others; and if it be not sincere, it generally discloses our true character, that we are wanting in sincerity.

With Christ His words revealed what He was. He was God, so He spake as never man spake. He was Man, Perfect Man; so He reached the hearts and comforted the sorrows of His hearers by the sweet persuasion of His words, and they "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth."

¹S. John xviii. 6.

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II. In the tenement of this mortal body is shut up that combination of intellectual and moral forces which I speak of and think of as "myself," and the organ by which I reveal myself to others is the tongue acting upon the air. The instrument by which I convey the force of my own power and influence to other souls is the faculty of speech. How wonderful this faculty is, how tremendous the power of its influence can be, we learn from our Lord's use of speech, from the way in which He wielded and still wields His Supremacy over the hearts and minds of men through the words which He spoke.

Here we must remember that the force of a man's words depends very much on what he is himself. Our speech reveals what we are. So we find that the words of a brave man inspire others with courage; the words of a good man awaken in others the desire to be good; the words of a wise man lead others into the paths of wisdom; while the words of a bad man have their corrupting influence upon those who listen to them.

There are some who use speech for the purpose of concealing what they are. Their utterances may produce an evil effect, but rarely a good one; for they do not carry with them the force of conviction. And even though earnestness and sincerity be simulated, it is not very long, as a rule, before their unreality is detected.

You may make an artificial rose, which at a distance looks very much like the real flower, so much like it that for a time it may deceive those who see it—only at a distance; but when they come to examine it, however perfectly it is made, its unreality is detected at once by the absence of the fragrance which belongs to a rose. You may attempt to produce this fragrance artificially by the addition of scent, but it does not last, and the simulation is soon discovered. A rose breathes

forth its sweetness without volition on its part; it cannot but do so, for its fragrance is its very nature.

So with a good man; his goodness reveals itself naturally in what he says. The last thing which would occur to such a man would be to try to let every one know how good he was by his words. If such a motive influenced his speech, it would rob it of its power for good, and his speech would be a revelation that he was wanting in that goodness he simulated; for he would be wanting in humility, wanting in sincerity.

It is character that reveals itself through speech, just as fragrance is breathed forth by the rose, not the character we *wear* or pretend to be, but the character which we *are*. The only real centre of influence is *self*; words or deeds are but channels by which we reveal ourselves. Hence, sanctification of character is the only road to sanctification of speech, and on our speech we must remember largely depends our influence for good or evil upon those with whom we come in contact.

III. How great a responsibility is the gift of speech, we are reminded by Christ Himself, when He said, "Every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned."¹ It must, therefore, be a very solemn duty for each of us, in view of this account of the use of the faculty of speech which we must render at the Day of Judgment, to do all in our power to sanctify our speech; and this, as we have seen, means the sanctification of our character.

The extreme difficulty of the task we may learn from a study of the third chapter of the Epistle of S. James. How emphatic are his words, "But the tongue can no man tame."² How sad his warning, "If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own

¹ S. Matt. xii. 36, 37.

² S. James iii. 8.

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heart, this man's religion is vain." ¹ The task is indeed arduous, but absolutely necessary, and it would be well to consider how best we can approach it. Our work must be partly negative and partly positive.

1. On the negative side, we must keep on rooting up the weeds of bad habits in speech. We know how difficult it is, entirely to eradicate weeds from a garden in which they have long been allowed to grow, but it is possible. We begin with those we can see by rooting them up as thoroughly as we are able, and the garden path soon seems free from weeds. A shower of rain comes, and, alas, in a little while a great number re-appear. These again we destroy. And so we go on, until after awhile the garden is practically free from weeds.

We must pursue the same course in regard to the weeds of speech, examining our conversation to discover them, and earnestly striving to eradicate all that we find. We must not be discouraged if for awhile they re-appear, but must persevere in our work of suppressing them until they are practically extirpated.

Let me point out to you some few of the principal weeds which need to be destroyed.

(a) Talking about self. I quite grant you that it is a most interesting subject to talk about, that is, interesting to the speaker, not always to the audience; but then it is scarcely good form, and certainly is inconsistent with Christian humility. Therefore, however great a sacrifice it involves, we must sternly make the rule never to talk about ourselves, that is, never more than is absolutely required by questions which may be put to us.

(b) The next most prevalent weed in the garden of speech is our neighbour's faults. How prolific a subject of conversation this is, and how interesting! There are weeds in our

¹ S. James i. 26.

garden with shoots which run along the ground and take fresh root continually. They are very suggestive of the luxuriant fertility of gossip about our neighbour. We must make a rule perseveringly to root up this growth, never to say what is not kind of our neighbour, unless it be strictly as a matter of duty, and then of course it will always be in private, never in general conversation where it may be repeated and distorted.

(c) Excited chatter is the next weed. How many people indulge in this! It has a wonderful power of dissipating the forces of the soul. It may not be about ourselves or about our neighbour's faults, but only an aimless, excited, unthinking chatter; but the very fact that it is unthinking brings it under the category of *idle* words which our Lord condemns; and then the excitement injures our self-control and spiritual calmness. This weed too we must try to destroy.

(d) Another noxious weed, which has its roots deep down in our vanity, is talking about things which we do not really understand, in order to seem learned or brilliant; talking, for instance, about books which we have not read, and of which our only knowledge is derived from an advertisement or a brief review. A weed of the same family is talking about people whom we scarcely know, as though we had an intimate acquaintance with them. Here we have another weed which must be rooted up.

(e) And then, lastly, the religious weed, which sometimes manifests itself in talking lightly on religious subjects, at other times in arguing hotly for the sake of controversial victory rather than for the sake of truth. Avoid religious controversy altogether if possible. Be ready to answer those who ask you with an honest desire to be instructed, but decline to argue on religious topics.

With this I bring my list of weeds to an end, and I can imagine some one desiring to say, "Why, you have left me

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nothing to talk about! I must not talk about myself or my neighbour's faults; I must not indulge in idle chatter, or pretend to know things which I really do not know; and I must not join in criticizing other people's religious views. Why, you have taken away everything that is interesting! Am I to sit silent always when I am with my friends?" Nay, surely you may cultivate in the garden of speech, flowers and fruit trees instead of weeds; flowers which will refresh your hearers instead of poisoning them; fruits which will nourish the soul and mind instead of injuring them.

2. This will bring us to the positive side of the work of sanctifying our speech.

(a) First, I should say *read*—in order to have matter for conversation. Read widely; read carefully; read good books. I do not mean goody books, nor necessarily religious books, but good literature; history, for instance.

What study can be more captivating than the study of history? There you will find characters as fascinating as any in modern works of fiction. And then there is the satisfaction of knowing that they are people in real life, not the mere creations of a novelist's fancy. There you come across scenes as thrilling as those depicted in the most sensational novel of to-day. There, too, you can study human character, which is not only a subject of interest, but of deep importance, both for your own work in life, and to enable you to help others.

Read up some branch of science, if you are drawn in that direction, only do not merely dabble in it. Remember what Lacordaire said, "A little science made me an infidel; more science brought me back to God." But I need not enumerate subjects for reading; only let me say, be thorough in your reading, and your conversation will be far more interesting to others than if you talk about yourself or your neighbour's faults.

☛ The Faculty of Speech.

(b) Use vocal prayer a great deal, and learn forms of devotion, especially the Psalms. They will be a great help to you at all times, especially in times of sickness. People often complain that at such times they cannot concentrate their minds sufficiently to pray, and that they do not know any prayers by heart. Learn the Psalms, those at least that are most suggestive, and you will never be at a loss in such times for prayers. In this way you will use the faculty of speech for GOD's glory.

(c) Practise meditation upon the Word of GOD. Listen to GOD's Voice instructing you. Listen to GOD revealing to you His will, His purpose for you. S. James says, "Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak."¹ If you are swift to hear GOD's Voice, you will certainly be slow to speak—about your neighbour's faults or your own virtues.

(d) Above all, seek grace in the Sacraments; realize that in attempting to sanctify your speech you are undertaking a great task, and need GOD's grace to the uttermost. Seek it in the channels in which GOD promises to bestow it. But remember it is not enough to receive the Sacraments, you must come with the right dispositions, in order that the grace may be efficacious in your souls.

Set yourself to practise these rules honestly and earnestly, and soon your character will be sanctified and your speech will become gracious. People will wonder at the gracious words which proceed from your lips. Some few will realize that it is Christ speaking in you, and they will not wonder, but they will strive to follow your example, and so will your speech be an influence for good in their lives.

¹ S. James i. 19.

Sermon XXVII.

THE HOLY GHOST, THE PERFECTER OF GOD'S WORKS.

(Septuagesima Sunday.)

GENESIS I. 2.

"And the Spirit of GOD moved upon the face of the waters."



TO-DAY the Church directs us to open our Bibles at the first page, and to read the inspired account of the creation.

In the second verse we are introduced to the Holy Ghost as the Agent of creation. We are first told that "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth." But in the opening verses of S. John's Gospel we learn that "the Word was GOD," and that "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made."¹

Thus we find that creation is ascribed to GOD the Father, to GOD the Son, and to GOD the Holy Ghost. (And we may well ask how this can be. The answer is, that there is no divided action in GOD, that there is but one Will in the three Persons of the Holy Trinity; so that what One does is done by All, though it has pleased GOD to observe a certain order in the accomplishment of His works.

(This great fact, that what one Person of the Holy Trinity does is the action of each of the other Persons, is called in theology the Doctrine of the Circumincession, and is a necessary result of the unity of Will in the Holy Trinity. It is well

¹S. John i. 3.

illustrated where S. Paul says, "But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the *Spirit of God* dwell in you. Now if any man have not the *Spirit of Christ*, he is none of His. And if *Christ* be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the *Spirit of Him* that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwelleth in you."¹

In this passage S. Paul speaks of the "Spirit of God" (the Father), the "Spirit of Christ," "Christ," and the "Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead," as identical, and Each of Them as dwelling in the Christian; that is, he uses these four names to describe the indwelling of God in the soul; thus showing that this indwelling is the work of each Person of the Holy Trinity. We find a similar instance of this in one of our Lord's discourses in S. John.²)

While each of God's operations is the outcome of the one undivided Will of the Holy Trinity, yet each Person has, so to speak, a special function in relation to this world, that of the Holy Ghost being the sanctifying or perfecting of God's works. As this is very strikingly brought before us in the lesson, let us make it the subject of the sermon this morning.

We have the authority of S. Basil (in his treatise on the Holy Ghost) for regarding the Holy Spirit as the Perfecter of God's works. By this we do not mean that God creates things imperfect, but that He creates them with immense possibilities for development, with latent germs of future perfection. And it would seem to be the special work of the Holy Ghost to bring about their development, and to lead and guide things to their perfect end according to God's purpose.

In those creatures of God which have a moral being, and therefore the power of choice, His gracious efforts are often

¹ Rom. viii. 9-12.

² Cf. S. John xiv. 16, 18, 23, 26.

frustrated and His work for them ends in failure ; but in those creatures which cannot thus oppose His purposes, His work (of perfecting them) goes on without hindrance, and in it we may see an illustration of what He would effect in us if we co-operated with His loving operations in our souls.

I. In the first lesson this morning we are first told that "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth." Then, that "the earth was without form, and void ; and darkness was upon the face of the deep." The words "without form, and void," should be translated "wasteness and desolation," and are words used in other parts of the Old Testament for a ruined city. Many have therefore thought that this verse implies that some catastrophe had taken place, by which the first creation of GOD had been ruined ; and some have further suggested that this ruin was occasioned by the fall of the devil and his angels, and that therefore the work of the Holy Spirit, recorded in the rest of the chapter, was really a work of restoration rather than of creation. Whether this be so or not is at best a matter of conjecture. What, however, we are concerned with is to show that the work of the Holy Spirit upon the material world was a work of evolution, development, and perfecting.

This action of the Holy Spirit is described generally as a "brooding over" the face of the waters. "The Spirit of GOD moved upon (brooded over) the face of the waters." And it is not a little striking, that in connection with His operation we find such phrases as (v. 11) "Let the earth *bring forth* grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself, . . . And the earth *brought forth* grass," etc. ; and again (v. 20), "Let the waters *bring forth* abundantly the moving creatures that hath life," etc. ; and yet again (v. 24), "Let the earth *bring forth* the living creature after his kind," etc.

These expressions are more consonant with a gradual unfolding or development of latent germs of life in the earth and in the water than with special acts of creation. Indeed it is very well worth our notice that the verb "to create" only occurs three times in the whole chapter; in v. 1, "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth"; in v. 21, "GOD created great whales, and every living creature that moveth"; and in v. 27, "GOD created man in His own image, in the image of GOD created He him; male and female created He them."

It is very remarkable that the creative act thus appears to be confined to the first creation of *matter*, to the first creation of *life*, and to the first creation of *mind*, and these are precisely the three creations which science practically admits, since science has never been able to suggest how matter came into existence, or to discover any bridge between dead matter and life. A generation or so ago there was put forth a theory of spontaneous generation, to account for the production of life out of dead matter. This, however, has long since been given up by all scientific men.

Again, the most industrious researches have failed to discover precisely the missing link between the mere animal and man, that is, between irrational life and mind. It is surely very striking, to say the least, that these three stumbling-blocks of unbelieving scientists should turn out to be the three creative acts revealed in the first chapter of Genesis, "GOD created the heaven and the earth"—matter, and "GOD created every living creature that moveth"—life, and "GOD created man"—mind.

We are told of this creation that "GOD saw every thing that He had made, and, behold, it was very good." So we find that the work of the Holy Ghost brooding over the primeval earth led to the production from it (apparently with only three

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creative acts) of a world peopled in all its kingdoms, and perfect, for GOD saw that it was very good.

At one time certain scientists strove to account for the evolution of the world as we find it now, by the application of one principle, that of "natural selection." Most scientists, however, now admit, and indeed for some time have admitted, that other factors are necessary to account for this development, and they add to "natural selection" a "stream of tendencies," which causes one thing to develop in one direction, and another in a very different direction.

We, however, without in the least disputing any real scientific truth, may explain this "stream of tendencies" as the work of the Holy Ghost, by means of environment and natural selection developing the endless variety of species which add so much to the beauty and usefulness of the world, and manifest so plainly the wisdom and power of GOD.

But it is in the new creation of grace that the work of the Holy Ghost is most plainly seen in perfecting and developing man according to GOD's original purpose for him. We may observe this both in the history of the race and in the life of the individual.

II. In the history of the race we may trace the work of the Holy Ghost in three stages :

1. From the Fall to the birth of Christ, in preparing man for the Incarnation.

2. In that operation of the Holy Ghost upon the substance of the Blessed Virgin Mary, by which the Incarnation was effected, and the second Person of the ever Blessed Trinity became Man.

3. From the Day of Pentecost in His work in the Church, sanctifying and perfecting the Body of Christ for its glorious future in eternity.

1. The work of the Holy Ghost, from the Fall to the birth of Christ, may be recognized in three operations:

(a) From within, we find that He acts upon man's conscience, convincing him of sin.

(b) From without, He reveals to man the law of God through the Mosaic dispensation, thus bestowing upon him a code of morals and a rule of worship.

(c) And further, through the prophets He reveals to man God's Will, on special occasions making known gracious promises, uttering solemn warnings, and declaring God's judgments upon those who rebel against Him.

We may therefore describe the work of the Holy Ghost, throughout this whole period from the Fall to the Incarnation, as a brooding over ruined, fallen man, working upon the ruined race, bringing order out of chaos, unfolding and developing latent powers and virtues, and by the ordering of His Providence preparing man for the Supreme Gift of God to the world, the Gift of His dear Son, through Whom the world should be taken into union with God.

2. At the Incarnation we find the Holy Ghost, Who for so long had brooded over the whole mass of humanity, selecting one individual, humanity's Crown and Flower, the Blessed Virgin Mary; for she was the product, so to speak, of His work upon the race. At the Annunciation He overshadows her, and by His operation and her own voluntary self-surrender, the crowning act of God's love is accomplished, the Word becomes flesh and tabernacles amongst us. At the Incarnation the Holy Ghost is the Agent, Mary is the instrument, and by these God's gracious purpose for man is effected.

3. At Pentecost there is an outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the mystical Body of Christ, the Church. As in the beginning "God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man become

a living soul,"¹ so now certain individuals are gathered together by the work of Christ on earth to form the body of His Church. By Christ's command they are assembled together with one accord in one place, waiting for the promise of the Father, of which they had heard from Him when the Holy Ghost descended upon them. And as in the first creation God breathed into man the breath of life, and man became a living soul, so in this new creation was breathed into that body—made up of human elements, of individual members—the Spirit of God; and that body, Christ's Church, became a living organism, instinct with divine life.

From Pentecost to the end of the world the Holy Ghost has worked and shall work in the Church, sanctifying it, perfecting it, meeting with opposition and temporary failure through its sins, but ultimately triumphing over all difficulties, and presenting the Church at the last a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but holy and without blemish.²

III. We may trace a similar work of the Holy Ghost in each individual soul, in each member of Christ's Church. This work commences at baptism, and does not cease until that soul is either perfected as one of the elect of God and is safe beyond the reach of temptation; or else has finally rejected the proffer of salvation by quenching the Holy Ghost.

As we find the Holy Ghost moving upon the face of the waters of the primeval earth, brooding over the material world, and by His operations guiding it and bringing it to perfection, so we may think of Him overshadowing the soul of the child at baptism; for as the water is poured upon the child, and the words uttered by the priest, God says, "Let there be Light"; and He Who is the Light of the world, Christ Himself, comes into that soul by the operation of the Holy Ghost.

¹ Gen. ii. 7.

² Cf. Ephes. v. 27.

Then throughout the life of that child it is the work of the Holy Ghost to aid in unfolding the hidden powers, in developing the spiritual faculties, in cultivating Christian virtues, working through His Providence in furnishing just the environment which that life needs—adverse forces to develop special virtues, supplying that soul with grace to meet its temptations, to bear the burdens of life, enabling it to produce the fruits of the Spirit and to grow “unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.”¹

Or again, we may contemplate the soul of a man given over to sin, whose nature is like the primeval chaos, passions raging where there should be peace, darkness reigning where there should be light. And yet that sinner is not forsaken, the same Spirit that moved upon the face of the waters broods over that sinner’s soul and waits for the moment when the fiat may go forth, “Let there be Light.” And then the work of conversion is begun by that heavenly light showing to the sinner his true state, by that light revealing to him Christ as his Saviour. He is led first to penitence, for the Holy Ghost is the Spirit of penitence; and then he is led onwards and upwards until he attains to the glorious freedom of the sons of God, “For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.”²

¹ Ephes. iv. 13.

² Rom. viii. 14.

Sermon XXVIII.

THE NEW CREATION. ✓

(Septuagesima Sunday.)

REVELATION XXI. 1-5.

✓. "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth : for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away ; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from GOD out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of GOD is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and GOD Himself shall be with them, and be their GOD. And GOD shall wipe away all tears from their eyes ; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain : for the former things are passed away. And He that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new."



IN the first and second lessons for this morning's Service we may observe a similarity and a striking contrast. The first lesson is taken from the opening pages of the Bible, the second from its closing chapters. In Genesis we read of the first creation of the heaven and earth ; in Revelation, of the last act in the drama, of the final or new creation.

The book of Genesis tells us that "In the beginning GOD created the heaven and the earth," and implies perhaps in the second verse the ruin of the original earth ; for it tells us that it was "without form and void," and the words used, which might be better translated "wasteness and desolation," seem to indicate some catastrophe by which this ruin was produced, since a ruin cannot be created as a ruin—it must have a past history. Then follows the renewal or restoration of the ruined earth for man's abode. After this we have the Fall, the intro-

duction of sin into the human race; and the rest of the Bible is the long story of the sin of man and the love of God.

The Book of Revelation, on the other hand, after bringing before us in a series of mysterious visions or pictures the great struggle between the powers of good and evil, ends with the proclamation of victory and with a description of its fruits in a new heaven and a new earth.

We must notice the position of our text. In the previous chapter we have the final termination of the conflict between God and His Church on the one side, and the devil and his angels on the other. The judgment and punishment of the devil is pronounced. He is "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, . . . and shall be tormented day and night for ever and ever."¹ Then the last vision opens with the words of our text, and in imagery of transcendent beauty, and language of the most exquisite poetry, we have a description of the character of the reward which awaits the redeemed, and a picture of their life and of its conditions throughout eternity.

The imagery in this passage is taken from certain visions of Isaiah and of Ezekiel, for Isaiah in his prophecy foretells the new heavens and the new earth²; and in Ezekiel God proclaims, "My tabernacle also shall be with them: yea, I will be their God, and they shall be My people."³

The whole of the last two chapters of the Book of Revelation is a description of the glories of heaven, but we must confine ourselves, for lack of time, to the opening verses, to the passage selected for our text.

Many questions are suggested by this passage for which we have no certain answer, and which we shall, therefore, pass over, but there is enough revealed clearly to afford us abundant matter for meditation. The chief characteristic of this description of heaven is summed up in the words with which our

¹ Rev. xx. 10.

² Cf. Isaiah lxv. 17; lxvi. 22.

³ Ezek. xxxvii. 27.

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passage closes, "Behold, I make all things *new*"; a new heaven, a new earth, and a new Jerusalem.

To understand what is meant, we must observe the force of the word translated "new." In the Greek Testament two words are used for our English word "new," *νέος* and *καινός*. The former signifies that which is new in regard to *time*, as, for instance, that which has just come into existence; the latter, that which is new as regards *quality*, implying its perfect soundness, that it is free from decay or deterioration.

We have a good illustration of this use of the two words in the passage, "they put new wine into new bottles."¹ The first "new" is *νέος*, signifying that the wine had just come into existence, that it was the wine of that year. The second is *καινός*, meaning that the wine-skins or bottles had never before been used, not that they had only just been made. In this sense we are told that Joseph of Arimathæa laid our Lord's body "in his own *new* tomb,"² which implies, not that it had been lately hewn out of the rock, but, as S. Luke notices, that it was a sepulchre "wherein never man before was laid."³

Hence, the expressions "new heavens," "new earth," and "new Jerusalem" do not necessarily require that they should have just come into existence, but are satisfied by such a transformation or change having passed over them, as to fit them for the abode of the saints.

Many commentators indeed have thought that the new heavens and the new earth indicate that this earth, renewed and regenerated, is to be the sphere of the kingdom of heaven in eternity. They point out that it is peculiarly fitting that this earth, which was the scene of our Lord's life and labours, of His sufferings and death, should also be the scene of His triumph; that this earth, where His saints have been tempted

¹S. Matt. ix. 17.

²S. Matt. xxvii. 60.

³S. Luke xxiii. 53.

and have struggled, have fallen and arisen, should be the sphere in which they should enjoy their reward, the fruits of their victories, for ever.

All this, however, is but conjecture and speculation. What is revealed is that in the "new earth," and "new heaven," and "new Jerusalem," there will be certain differences or changes from our present earthly life, and these are represented as partly negative and partly positive. Let us consider them.

I. We will take the negative characteristics of heaven first. We may notice in our text that four are revealed.

1. There will be no more death. Death is the penalty of sin, and in this world spares no one. While death comes to each at God's appointed time, and therefore at the time when it is best for each to go, yet how often it appears to us inopportune, how many bitter disappointments it brings in its train!

The hero leading his troops in battle is cut down at the moment when victory has been secured, is cut down before he can enjoy any of its fruits. The statesman, just about to reap the recompense of years of patient diplomacy, dies, and leaves to others to carry out his plans and to gather in their rewards. The great preacher, who has attracted the attention of the world and touched the hearts of the multitude, and is delivering with incomparable fervour and force God's message to souls, winning the careless to God, the sinful to penitence, and the noble to God's service, is cut off at the high tide of his usefulness! The great scientist, who after years of patient toil has almost solved some great problem of nature, passes away, and leaves the results of his work unknown! Or, to turn to humbler spheres, the man who is so indispensable to his family, the mother who is so necessary to her young children, is taken; the one whom we loved best on earth,

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without whom life seems hopeless and empty, is suddenly torn from us by some accident!

Yes, we all realize the dreadfulness of death, even though it be the gate into everlasting life; but in heaven there shall be no more death; for then the penalty will have been paid, sin conquered, and in place of death we shall look forward to a life of endless joy, a life of perfect happiness, the life for which GOD created us.

2. In heaven there will be no more pain. Pain in this life is not an unmixed evil. It too is the penalty of sin, but it is both remedial and disciplinary. It develops the latent powers of the soul.

How many virtues are the outcome of pain! The virtue of sympathy—how great it is! how barren human nature would be without it! yet it depends upon the existence of pain and suffering. The virtue of patience, which S. James tells us produces perfection,¹ the virtue of meekness, of self-control; the virtue of mercy—the GOD-like virtue; and many others, are the direct products of pain.

And yet pain has its sad side. It is distressing to look out upon the world and see how much pain and suffering there is, of mind, and body and soul. This has caused some who know not GOD, and therefore do not recognize the fruits of pain in eternity, to allow the phenomenon of pain and suffering in this world to lead them to deny the goodness of GOD and to say that they can see no signs on earth of a benevolent Creator. But in heaven there shall be no more pain, and in its place will be the glorious virtues which have sprung from its root; the redeemed will see that the fair flowers of sanctity have sprung, many of them, from the seeds of pain.

3. Again, there will be no more sorrow. How early in this

¹ Cf. S. James i. 4.

life sorrow manifests itself! how quickly the smiling face of the child is bathed in tears! how soon upon our memories are ploughed recollections of sorrow! Sorrow is king here; all must recognize his sway. But our Lord has taught, out of the fulness not only of His divine knowledge but of His human experience, that "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted." For sorrow, like pain, has a wonderful, sanctifying influence upon character, deepening and developing it.

And then Christ teaches, what the words of our text confirm, that sorrow has in it the elements of future joy, for He said to His disciples, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy."¹ And we are told in the text that "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes."

How sad to have no sorrow to be turned into joy, to have no tears for God to wipe away from our eyes! This would deprive us of one of the rewards of heaven, for sorrow seems indeed to be the raw material of future happiness; and the Psalmist tells us that "They that sow in tears: shall reap in joy; [and that] He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed: shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him."²

4. And lastly, there shall be no more sea. Probably this is to be taken metaphorically rather than literally. To the Jews the sea was an unmixed terror, for they were never a sea-faring nation, and had no great seaports of their own. We may gather their dread of the sea from the words of the Psalmist, "They that go down to the sea in ships: and occupy their business in great waters; These men see the works of the Lord: and His wonders in the deep. For at His word the stormy wind ariseth: which lifteth up the waves thereof. They

¹S. John xvi. 20.

²Psalm cxxvi. 6, 7.

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are carried up to the heaven, and down again to the deep: their soul melteth away because of the trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man: and are at their wit's end."¹

And yet we know that the sea is one of God's best gifts to man. It has been called the life-blood of the earth. Its vapours supply rain, which fertilizes the earth; its currents render lands habitable which otherwise would be ice-bound—our own land, for instance. Its breezes refresh us; its tides help our navigation.

But with all this, it is the emblem of change and unrest, for what is so changeable and restless as the sea? Its pulsations are ever throbbing; it knows no repose. The Prophet uses it as the image of the ungodly when he says, "The wicked are like the troubled sea, when (for) it cannot rest."²

The sea is the symbol of change, and how dreadful change is! It mars life's sweetest moments, spoils our greatest happiness here, for there is the thought, "This will not last!" My strength will fail; I shall grow old, and lose my power. Or he whom I love, the brightness of my life, will change and wane, and decay and die. Nothing here can last.

"Change and decay in all around I see;
O Thou Who changest not, abide with me."

In heaven there will be no more change, because heaven is eternal; and the essence of eternity is not so much a succession of years, a chain of endless time, as an unchanging and perfect present, "a simultaneously full and perfect possession of interminable life." God is Eternal, "with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."³ And the saints in glory will enjoy this attribute of changelessness and eternity.

II. But there is a positive side to the joys of heaven, as

¹ Psalm cvii. 23-28.

² Isaiah lvii. 20.

³ S. James i. 17.

brought before us in our text, and in regard to it we may notice three points.

1. Heaven is described as a holy city, the New Jerusalem. Man is a social being, and a great part of his happiness consists in his intercourse with his fellow-men. Here, through sin, that intercourse is often interrupted and perverted. Men, as citizens of the kingdom of heaven, ought to live in perfect charity towards one another, and in the fellowship and sympathy of common interest and work. But sin has perverted this relationship, and men wrong one another, injure one another, and hate one another. In heaven the social life of humanity will be perfectly realized, and this is indicated by the description of heaven as a holy city.

2. But heaven is also pictured "as a bride adorned for her husband." Man is not only a social being; he has his own individuality, his own distinct personality; and surely this is implied in the image of the bride. While in heaven we shall enjoy the fellowship of the saints, and man's social life will be realized in its utmost perfection towards his fellow-man, yet his relationship towards GOD will be an *individual* relationship. He will not be merely one of a great body, loving and loved by GOD, but will have the enjoyment of the most intimate personal love and individual union with GOD. And this seems to be set forth under the image of the bride; for the most intimate union on earth is that of the bride and her husband, and this is used to symbolize the closeness and intimacy of the union of the soul with Christ, the individuality of their mutual love.

3. But the supreme joy of heaven is revealed by GOD Himself, for S. John heard a great voice out of heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of GOD is with men, and He will dwell (tabernacle) with them, and they shall be His people, and Himself shall be 'GOD with them,' their GOD." You

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will notice the difference of the translation. In our version it is, "and GOD Himself shall be with them, and be their GOD." But it would be better rendered "and Himself shall be 'GOD with them' (Emmanuel) their GOD."

What does this teach us? Surely, the most perfect fellowship with GOD. GOD indeed tabernacles in the city of the New Jerusalem, tabernacles with the bride.

This supreme revelation of GOD's relation to His people through eternity we may trace in four distinct stages.

(a) First, there was the tabernacle of the congregation in the wilderness, with the Shekinah of GOD's presence, and the Urim and Thummim by which on great occasions the High Priest was enabled to consult GOD and to learn His Will.

(b) Then, at the Incarnation the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled amongst us.¹ Our Lord's life on earth was the second stage.

(c) Again, there is His sacramental presence in His Church through the work of the Holy Ghost.

(d) And all these lead up to the final and supreme revelation that GOD through eternity will tabernacle with men, will be "Emmanuel," "GOD with them." He will be their GOD, and they shall be His people, in the fullest and most absolute sense of that relationship. In v. 22 we read, "And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord GOD Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it." GOD no longer tabernacles in a special place, as in the Tabernacle of the wilderness, or upon the Altars of the Church, for heaven is one uninterrupted act of worship; there there is no (*ναός*) inner shrine or sanctuary; for the whole city is now the sanctuary, and one great act of worship goes up everywhere.

What practical lesson may we learn from this revelation? Surely, to endure in this life all its sorrows, and pains, and

¹ Cf. S. John i. 14.

difficulties; to endure, realizing that "here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come"¹; to endure, realizing that "our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."²

Sermon XXIX.

THE FALL OF MAN.

(Sexagesima Sunday.)

GENESIS III. 6.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat."



IN the first lesson to-day we have brought before us one of the most important events in the history of our race—the Fall of man, at the same time a fundamental doctrine of Christianity, and the key to one of the greatest problems of human life.

The Fall of man is a doctrine common to every system of Christian theology, clearly taught in Holy Scripture, and apparently the only explanation of that tendency to evil which is inherent in every child of man. In some systems, however, it is so exaggerated as to be inconsistent with our moral conception of the justice of God; while on the other hand it is

¹ Heb. xiii. 14.

² 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18.

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held by rationalists to be incompatible with scientific theories in regard to the history of man, for they tell us that not only can no traces of a "Fall" be discovered, but that an unbroken progress of development is exhibited in the life of men upon earth.

I. Let us take the scientific objection first. It is often said that science sees no traces of a "Fall" in man's history, but on the contrary finds abundant evidences of his continuous upward progress, both in the increase of his physical wealth and in the development of his intellectual life. We can only briefly point out now that the effects of the Fall are to be found chiefly in man's *moral* life, and only in a secondary degree in his physical and intellectual life; and that, although man has undoubtedly made some progress even in his moral life, yet it has been but fitful and uncertain, and confined to individuals.

A great part of the difficulty would be removed by a little clearer theological teaching concerning man's state before the Fall. Holy Scripture certainly does not lead us to suppose that the first man was supernaturally endowed with scientific knowledge—that he was an artist, or musician, or mathematician. All these gifts are the result of acquired knowledge, and in spite of the Fall have been developed by Adam's descendants. The same is true in regard to most of the developments of what we call civilization.

The life of Adam in the Garden of Eden seems to have been of a very simple character; for instance, we learn that he was "naked"; and we have no hint that he lived in a house, or even that he was acquainted with the use of fire. But what we are told most distinctly is that he knew and loved God; that he lived in happy communion with God; that he obeyed God's commands; and that his nature, like the nature of the lower animals, was at harmony with itself. This is what the

Book of Genesis tells us about the first man; and it also tells us that by an act of disobedience he incurred God's displeasure, and lost that happy fellowship with God and with nature which he had enjoyed in the Garden of Eden.

The effect of the Fall, then, is to be traced primarily in man's moral nature, in the tendency to do wrong, in the constant struggle which the effort to do right involves. This tendency is a factor in human life so patent and so universal that we have a right to demand of science an explanation of it. It can hardly be accounted for by any theory of evolution, since it is a hindrance, not a help, to progress, and it is not found in the lower animals.

Indeed, the fact that man alone among all the animate creatures does not pursue what he knows to be his true end, is absolutely inexplicable, without the doctrine of a Fall and original sin. Where can we find any animal which acts as man often does when he persists in doing those things which his reason tells him are injurious; as, for instance, when the drunkard persists in drinking, though his reason tells him not only of the immediate suffering which will follow his drunken bout, but that he is ruining every part of his nature—intellectual, moral, and physical—by persevering in this sin. Instances of this sort, which are so terribly frequent among men, and are not confined to any one vice, seem scientifically to demand the doctrine of a Fall as the only explanation of man's moral weakness; for we do not find animals (except where they have been corrupted by intercourse with man) which pursue a course of life contrary to their own interests.

It is true that the very conception of a moral nature implies a power of choice, and therefore the existence of good and evil, or of that which is good and that which is less good, for evil *may be* only various degrees of the privation of goodness. We cannot conceive of a moral nature apart from this power

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of choice, or apart from the possibility of choosing wrongly. We cannot, indeed, conceive of the possession of any virtue apart from some temptation to the opposite sin.

We can have an automaton, a very complicated piece of machinery, a very perfect watch for instance, which tells accurately the hours and minutes, and even the days of the month and phases of the moon; but, however perfect the mechanism is, this does not constitute a moral nature. We cannot attribute to that watch the possession of any virtue, we cannot say that the watch is pure, or patient, or honest, or amiable, because these virtues at once imply temptation to the opposite, and a power of choice.

We do not speak of that man as patient who has never had any trials. On the contrary, by saying he is patient we imply that he has had many trials or temptations against patience. We do not say of a man that he is courageous, without inferring that his courage has been tested. Hence, we see at once that a moral nature implies temptation, the choice between various degrees of goodness, or rather, as we should say, between good and evil.

But there is one thing which a moral nature does not necessarily imply, and that is a tendency always to choose evil, constantly to do that which reason warns us will injure us, will retard our development, will spoil our ultimate happiness. But this tendency is precisely what we find in every man, and surely science is bound to recognize this enormous factor in the problem of human life, and either to offer some solution of it, or to show that the solution provided by revelation is inadequate, or that it is not in accordance with observed facts.

In pointing out that the history of man exhibits continual progress towards civilization, science does not in the slightest degree disprove his proneness to error in his intellect and to

sin in his moral nature. And Christianity, in teaching that these universal phenomena in man are to be traced to the Fall of Adam, does not in the slightest degree contradict the scientific fact that the life of man on earth has been one of material and intellectual progress.

There is, therefore, no conflict between the Christian doctrine of the Fall and the observed *facts* of human life. On the contrary, the doctrine of the Fall is the only solution which has been offered to account for the universal phenomenon of sin in man. And we may go a step further and point out that Christianity does account for all the facts in the problem of human life, while the ordinary theory of evolution without a Fall leaves out one of the chief factors in that problem.

II. There remains for us to consider what is involved in the doctrine of the Fall, and to point out where that doctrine has been exaggerated.

At the Reformation a doctrine of the Fall was taught by Luther which involved the total depravity of man, the practical loss of his free-will, and therefore his inability to do any good actions. Luther held that the effect of the Fall was to destroy God's image in man, and to deprive man of the capacity of serving God. This doctrine, which is a gross exaggeration of S. Paul's teaching, is quite incompatible with our conception of the justice of God. And we may be sure that any doctrine which violates our moral sense must be untrue, since that moral sense is itself the gift of God.

What, then, is the Church's teaching in regard to this mysterious subject? It is that Adam as originally created by God possessed the gift of "supernatural grace," this very term signifying that it was a free gift of God over and above that which was proper to his nature. The effect of this grace was to enable Adam perfectly to restrain the appetites of his lower

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nature, so that there resulted an equilibrium or harmony in his nature. Adam had every passion which we now possess, but it was perfectly controlled by reason, aided by the gift of grace. When by disobedience Adam fell, he forfeited this supernatural grace; and then began a struggle between his higher and lower nature, resulting in a steady downward course, as the lower nature more and more mastered the higher.

We thus see that while the image of God in man was defaced, it was not destroyed; and while man's higher nature was weakened, it did not become totally depraved. Man was still able to do works which were naturally good, and, as we find in the case of many of the heathen, actually did often live a good life according to nature. He still had a natural conscience, as S. Paul tells us,¹ which taught him, though imperfectly, to know and to serve God.

What man, therefore, *lost* by the Fall was simply the gift of grace, which is restored in Christ, through baptism; for by it we are transplanted into Christ, Who is the righteous One, the Author of all righteousness or justice. This loss, however, leaves man's nature unbalanced and prone to evil.

From this it follows that original sin is not the inheritance of Adam's *guilt*, but solely the inheritance of a nature deprived of grace. We may illustrate this from a common occurrence in our own experience. A rich man, by a life of dissipation or perhaps by reckless speculation, loses his fortune. The result is that his descendants do not inherit what he once had, but by his own act lost. They inherit what he hands down to them; his nature, but not his fortune; for that was no part of his nature.

Original sin, then, is the privation of that original righteousness which was the result of supernatural grace. It is not the

¹ Cf. Rom. i. 18-22; ii. 14, 15.

desires and temptations which are common to our fallen nature; for they remain after baptism, which takes away original sin. Our nature and faculties remain entire, and we are still capable of natural good, but by the Fall we are left without grace, and therefore without the means of reaching that supernatural end for which GOD created us.

The remission of original sin consists in being incorporated into Christ, Who is the Author of all righteousness. Concupiscence, or the rebellion of the senses, though not original sin, or in itself a sin at all, is a consequence of the Fall, in that the will, weakened by the loss of grace, is unable to resist the first motions of concupiscence.

By the Fall man did not lose the image of GOD, nor did it render the soul substantially bad or completely depraved; for the second Person of the Blessed Trinity in the Incarnation took on Him a nature substantially the same as ours, and certainly He assumed nothing which was substantially bad.

We have shown that the doctrine of the Fall is not in conflict with any real scientific truth. On the contrary, it seems to be demanded by that proneness to error and evil which is universal in human nature. We have further tried to remove one common objection against the doctrine of original sin by showing that this objection is directed against a Lutheran exaggeration of that doctrine, which is, indeed, quite inconsistent with our conception of GOD's justice. This, however, does not really touch the Church's doctrine at all, for that only teaches us that without GOD's grace we cannot please GOD, and that the only revealed way by which we can obtain that grace when in a state of fallen nature is by the Sacrament of Baptism.

A right understanding of the effects of the Fall in man is a great help in the practical psychology of the spiritual life, and

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enables us to meet those objections of rationalists, which are mostly the result of a misapprehension of the Church's doctrine on this important subject.

Sermon XXX.

WORLDLINESS, AND ITS REMEDY. ✓

(Sexagesima Sunday.)

V. S. MATTHEW VI. 33, 34.

"Seek ye first the kingdom of GOD, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof."

IN that part of the Sermon on the Mount from which our text is taken, and of which indeed it is the conclusion, our Lord Jesus Christ deals with a practical difficulty in human life, and warns us against a serious danger. The danger is worldliness. The difficulty is how to fulfil our duty, how to live our life in the world, without becoming worldly.

I. Our Lord begins by laying down a great principle, "No man can serve two masters: . . . Ye cannot serve GOD and mammon."¹ You will observe He does not say "You *ought* not," but "You *cannot*," that is, it is impossible. There cannot be a divided allegiance between GOD and the world, so that we sometimes recognize the authority of one, and sometimes that of the other. Christ tells us that this is impossible. And yet a very large number of persons who call themselves

¹ S. Matt. vi. 24.

Christians spend their lives trying to accomplish this impossibility, and with the result that they either end by serving the world as their master, and rejecting God by disobeying His precepts, or they serve sometimes the one and sometimes the other, and so make a success of neither service.

The Christian who, believing Christ's statement that it is impossible to serve two masters, chooses the service of God with all his heart, and treats the claims of the world as entirely subordinate to God's service, will succeed in making the best both of this life and of the life to come.

He who tries to serve both will end by making the best of neither. While he who boldly rejects Christ's service and chooses that of the world may for awhile make a success of this life *from the world's point of view*, but of course will forfeit the happiness of heaven. One master must be supreme always and in all things, and when the claims of the other conflict they must always give way. How much worry we should be saved if we recognized this principle, how many anxious decisions would be simplified, how many wrong actions would be avoided!

If we took God for our God, and therefore recognized His precepts as of absolute obligation, how many specious excuses for wrong-doing would be swept away! For instance, we not infrequently persuade ourselves that the end we have in view is so good that it justifies us in adopting means which are quite incompatible with God's commandments. Or, on the other hand, when we are quite clear that a certain thing is our duty, we are held back from it by a consideration of unpleasant consequences—what people will think or say about us if we do this. Or again, when it is to our interest to do something which our conscience tells us is not quite right, the excuse suggests itself that "Every one does this," that is, that the *world* calls it lawful, and therefore that those who are serv-

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ing the world do it. Instead of worrying over these things, and generally falling back upon a compromise which spoils both our service of GOD and of the world, how much stronger and more peaceful would be our life if we acted upon Christ's principle that we cannot serve two masters, and that we have pledged ourselves to the service of GOD.

Let us, however, carefully observe what Christ does *not* say, as well as what He does. He says, "Ye cannot serve GOD and mammon." Mammon, which means wealth or money, is a personification of worldliness, for money in some form or other is the idol of the world. Money, or what money will buy of power, or of popularity, or of pleasure, is what we mean by worldliness. There are many worldly persons who perhaps plead that money is not their idol, but who substitute for it the pursuit of popularity, or of pleasure, or of power—all things which money will purchase, and therefore all forms of worldliness.

Now observe what our Lord does *not* say. He does not say that a man is not to make money or to possess money, but that he is not to *serve* money as his master. The word translated "serve" (*δουλεύειν*) signifies to serve as a slave, to belong to. Money is therefore not to be our master, but our servant. Then if we use it rightly, so far from being an evil, it may be a blessing to us, for if we use it in GOD's service we may, out of our gold, make our crown.

Our Lord therefore says, no man can be the bond-slave of mammon, or money, or the world, and also belong to GOD. He does not say that no man can be rich, for a man can use his riches, as Christ tells us in another place, to make to himself friends who may receive him into everlasting habitations.¹ He does this if he uses them in such a manner that they will be treasure laid up in heaven. He does this if he

¹ Cf. S. Luke xvi. 9.

so employs his wealth that in heaven he will find its fruits in the poor whom he has helped in their need, in the sinful whom he has helped to convert through aiding missionary work; so that these meet him as friends and welcome him to the everlasting habitations of the saints.

II. Christ not only lays down a principle, but He deals with a practical difficulty—the difficulty of living in the world without becoming worldly. A man may say, “I must live, and life is such a struggle to get on, that I cannot succeed except by adopting the world’s methods and by conforming to the world’s requirements. I have to obtain food and clothing and the comforts of life, and a store laid by for a rainy day in the future, and in striving for these things I can hardly avoid becoming more or less worldly. I know that what I do is not strictly in accord with Christ’s teaching, and it often makes me very uncomfortable, very unhappy, to think of this. But what am I to do?”

The difficulty is a real one, but our Lord meets it. He says no less than three times,¹ “Take no thought” for these things.

When our translation of the Bible was made, “to take thought” meant to take serious, anxious, careful thought; so that to “take no thought” was equivalent to saying, “Do not be anxious, do not worry, about the matter.” In our day, to “take no thought” has come to signify “not to think about the matter at all.” But this is not our Lord’s meaning, for He often, both by His example and precept, inculcates forethought.

The word (*μεριμνήσητε*) which is used in this phrase has at its root the idea of division, so that it really signifies “to be drawn in different directions, to be distracted by cares.” And this is what our Lord condemns—not the taking forethought. Christ therefore meets this difficulty by advising us not to worry

¹ S. Matt. vi. 25, 31, 34.

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about things in the future, but to trust GOD; and He calls our attention to certain facts in the world around us in regard to our life which prove the wisdom of His advice.

1. First, He points out that the *end* is of more importance than the *means*, for He says, "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

We eat and drink to sustain life. That ought to be the end or purpose of taking food. We wear clothes to protect our bodies. But some people make their food and clothes an *end* instead of a *means*. They live to eat, instead of eating to live; with the result that instead of what they eat and drink keeping their bodies in health, and so preserving and prolonging life, it has precisely the opposite effect.

They think too much about the pleasures of eating and drinking. Some eat or drink to excess, others eat what is unwholesome; both with the same result, that the health of the body is injured, and therefore the life perhaps shortened or rendered full of suffering from the many diseases which are the result of over-indulgence in food or drink.

The same may be said of many in regard to clothes. Their purpose is to protect the body. But not a few people spend time and thought and money upon clothes as though that were one of the chief ends of life.

Surely our Lord's words here suggest that we bestow too much care upon these things; that if we lived simpler lives we should be healthier, our bodies would be more free from suffering, our lives would be longer and happier; and we should probably need very much less money for our living expenses.

Another great cause of anxiety would therefore be removed; for instead of living above our means and having to adopt

the world's methods to make money, we could live healthier and happier lives on a much smaller income, if we cared less for the world's opinion about us—in other words, if we realized that the world was not our master.

2. Then Christ draws our attention to a world around us—the world of nature. He points us to the birds, to the flowers, to the grass. GOD takes care of these; how much more will He take care of us! The birds live in the present, without worrying about the future. GOD provides for them. Surely, instead of being over-anxious, we should put our trust in GOD. Our Heavenly Father knows that we have need of these things—of food and raiment; and if we do our duty with ordinary thrift we can surely leave it to His providence to bless our work, so that whether we have much or little, we can therewith be content.

3. The last fact which Christ suggests for our consideration is the uncertainty of the future, the fact that with all our care we can do so little to change that future. He says, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?" This might be better rendered, "Which of you by being anxious can add to the measure of his life or age?"

How seldom our anxiety, and care, and worry tend to the prolongation of the life in this world, about which we are so anxious. How often it has precisely the opposite effect! It ends in considerably shortening it, as well as rendering it a life of suffering.

Again, Christ says, "Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." How little we can really do to control the morrow! Financial calamities upset our best-laid plans; epidemics break out and carry off those who are most careful of their health; railway accidents occur when we least expect them. The morrow, the

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immediate future, is not in our hands to any great extent; it depends upon God's providence.

If we are trying our best to serve one master—God—we can surely trust God to take care of us; but if we are trying to serve two masters, and in spite of our Lord's warning, worrying about the morrow, absorbed in schemes for making money, what claim have we upon God's care? We are not trusting Him; we are not fulfilling His precepts. We are acting more like the man in the parable, who said, "This will I do: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there will I bestow all my fruits and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry. But God said unto him, Thou fool, this night thy soul shall be required of thee: then whose shall those things be, which thou hast provided? So is he that layeth up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."¹

How little the morrow is worth our anxious thought, on account of its shortness and its absolute uncertainty! "Sufficient unto the day are the evils thereof." Meet the difficulties of the present, meet them bravely, meet them relying upon God's grace, and do not spoil what happiness there may be in to-day by over-anxiety about the uncertain future of this life.

III. There is, however, a future about which you ought to be most anxious, the great future for which all this life is but a preparation—the future of eternity—take thought for that. Notice one point in our Lord's illustration from nature, "Consider the lilies of the field; *how* they grow." How do they grow? Not by gathering around them a store which is only theirs for a short time, and to which they have but an accidental relation, but by developing their true life from within. They take from the outer world only what they can use in

¹ S. Luke xii. 18-22.

building up their tissue—from the soil certain properties, from the air other constituents—and with these they build up and develop their life according to the laws which God has impressed upon it. And with what result? “That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.”

The true life we have to care for in this world must be developed according to the laws which God has impressed upon our being, not in defiance of those laws. The body must be developed according to the laws of health, the mind according to the laws of the intellect, the soul according to the laws of righteousness. Our true glory, both here and in eternity, must be in what we *are*, not in what we *wear*; in what we *become*, not in what we *possess*; in ourselves, not in our clothes; in our characters, not in our riches.

There is a story found in a mediæval writer, of two men who were returning to their native city after long absence, to settle there for the rest of their lives. They met on shipboard on the journey home. One was a philosopher, who had spent many years in visiting the great schools of learning and in investigating truth, and mastering the principles of philosophy. The other was a merchant, who had travelled through many lands and had amassed a large fortune, and having completed his last journey was bringing his wealth home, with the intention of purchasing an estate and settling down in his native city to a life of affluence and dignity. He had with him much store of gold, and jewels, and precious stuffs, the fruits of years of toil and labour.

The two men became friends, and day by day as the ship was carried on her way by favourable winds they discussed their future, and the advantages of their respective vocations. The merchant spoke of the treasures he was bringing to his native city, and of the life of dignity which awaited him there.

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The philosopher, on the other hand, set forth the beauty of truth and the pleasures of the intellect.

Their journey was nearly ended when, as they approached the shores of their native country, a sudden storm arose. The ship was wrecked. Both men saved their lives, but nothing else. The philosopher, however, reached his home, having lost nothing of his possessions, which were treasures of the mind and of the soul. The merchant reached his home a beggar, having lost all that he had spent his life in acquiring.

The story is a parable of life here, an illustration of our Lord's injunction, "Consider the lilies of the field, *how* they grow." Sooner or later we shall all have to pass through the shipwreck of death. All life is a preparation for this. How shall we use it? In taking anxious thought as to what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed? Or, following our Lord's advice, in taking thought how we can grow in wisdom and righteousness; how, like the lilies, we can develop the powers of our nature, that they may have their fruition in eternity?

Shall we use the world for this end—to supply what our body needs in this life, what our mind needs for its growth, what our soul needs for its development? Then we shall not allow the anxiety to possess those things of the world, which we cannot carry beyond the grave, to be a hindrance to us in the true work of life, the preparation for heaven; but we shall remember that a man's real wealth is in himself, in the development of mind and character, since these alone can survive the shipwreck of death.

Our Blessed Lord ends by giving us another principle to guide us in this work, the principle "Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." This follows as a necessary sequence from

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the principle with which we began—"No man can serve two masters."

You were made for God, you were made to be righteous; your happiness here and hereafter depends upon this: Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and you will have the best of this world and the best of the world to come—the best of this world, for you will be free from its cares, having cast all your cares upon God, for He careth for you;¹ and the best of the world to come, for, having laid up your "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal,"² you will find them there, and enjoy them throughout eternity.

¹ Cf. 1 S. Peter v. 7.

² S. Matt. vi. 20.

Sermon XXXI.

THE LAW IN REGARD TO BLOOD.

(Quinquagesima Sunday.)

GENESIS IX. 4.

“ But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”

THESE words formed part of God's special revelation to Noah immediately after the flood. It is a question which has long been debated, whether or not animal food was permitted before the flood. The matter is not, however, of importance, but it is clear that the first *positive* permission to eat of animal food contained in revelation is to be found in God's words to Noah after the flood, “ Every moving thing that liveth shall be meat for you; even as the green herb have I given you all things. But flesh with the life thereof, which is the blood thereof, shall ye not eat.”

This positive injunction to abstain from eating blood reappears again and again in the Pentateuch, the reason given being that the blood is the vehicle of the animal soul or life. The emphatic character of the command and its basis forces upon us the conclusion that the relation of the soul to the blood is one to which the highest importance is attached in Holy Scripture, and therefore that some great principle underlies it. Let us this morning investigate it.

I. In Jewish psychology it is the animal soul possessed by man in common with all sentient beings, which is identified with the blood, not the rational soul, excepting in

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so far as man's rational soul or spirit is immanent in the animal soul. It is, therefore, only the soul on its physical side which is in Holy Scripture associated with the blood either as its vehicle or as one with it—though not quite in the sense of identity, for the expression “the soul is the blood” alternates with “the soul is *in* the blood.”

In the Book of Leviticus we have some further revelation in regard to the treatment of the blood: “I will even set My face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. . . . And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof.”¹

From this passage we learn that the blood is either to be used in sacrifice, sprinkled upon the altar, and the remainder poured out at its foot, or else to be poured out upon the ground and covered with dust.

That this injunction was considered of binding obligation among the Jews throughout all their history, we learn from the fact that in the Council of the Apostles at Jerusalem, in which the question of freeing the Christian Gentiles from Mosaic ordinances was discussed, it was decided that while releasing them from the obligations of the ceremonial precepts, they were still to observe the law in regard to blood.

For in the circular letter of the council we find these

¹ Lev. xvii. 10-14.

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words, "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things; that ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled,"¹ (that is, from animals which had not been bled to death). This letter, so far as its positive commands—to abstain from blood, and from things offered to idols—are concerned, is generally considered to have been only of temporary obligation and for the purpose of preventing unnecessary friction between the Gentile and Jewish Christians, the latter of whom would have been shocked at the transgression of a law of such great antiquity, and to them of such solemn obligation.

Now, let us ask what principle is involved in this law, and what was the purpose of its enactment?

1. It taught, first, that life was GOD'S special prerogative, and was always sacred in His eyes. So that, although it was permitted to kill animals for the use of food, no animal life was to be destroyed unnecessarily; and when it had to be taken for food, the blood was to be poured out, either in sacrifice upon the altar, or upon the ground, and in the latter case it was to be covered with dust, in token that it was a sacred thing and belonged to GOD.

Further, it taught, *a fortiori*, that human life was still more sacred, since not only was it to be required at the hand of man, but even at the hand of a beast, the only exception being the judicial execution of a murderer. "Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed." We can therefore well understand that this law had a great effect in impressing upon the Jews the sanctity of life.

2. But the passage which we have quoted from Levit-

¹ Acts xv. 28, 29.

icus shows us that this was not its only purpose, for that the reason specially revealed to the Jews was that the blood was the instrument of sacrifice. "I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul." This passage perhaps should be translated, "It is the blood that maketh an atonement by means of the life," that is, of the life which is in it, and which is symbolically offered with it.

II. We know now that all the Jewish sacrifices pointed to our Lord's sacrifice upon the Cross, that the pouring out of the blood typified the redemption of the world by the shedding of our Lord's blood upon the Cross. This is what was emphasized and kept before the Jew by this law, which thus became a great factor in the preparation of the Jew for the coming of the Messiah, and for His sacrificial death.

The moment came—the most eventful moment in the world's history—when the sacrifice was to be offered and the blood poured out by which the world was to be redeemed. And on the eve of that great day, on the threshold of His Passion, our Lord Jesus Christ performed a solemn act, instituted a solemn rite, which was at once a Sacrament and a Sacrifice, for "He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; for this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins."¹

The apostles might have objected, "It is not lawful for us to drink blood, for it is the life, and to drink it is strictly forbidden by the law." But our Lord a year previously had said to them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood,

¹S. Matt xxvi. 27, 28.

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ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life";¹ and so had prepared them for this mystery.

III. But why did our Lord give them His blood to drink? We must go back to the Fall, the grievous effects of which Christ died to take away, and ask, What, precisely, was lost by the Fall of Adam? Grace, and nothing else, for there was in Adam before the Fall the same nature that is in us, sin excepted. When God created man He added a gift which did not properly belong to human nature, the gift of supernatural grace. The word "supernatural" implies that it was something above that which belonged to his nature; and the word "grace," that it was the free gift of God.

But what is grace? Grace has been described as "the life of God in the soul." Just as the life-blood flows through every part of the body, supplying every member with nourishment and life, so grace is the life-blood of the body of Christ, flowing through every living member, supplying it with nourishment and spiritual life. Now, what was restored to man by the Incarnation and Passion of our Lord? Surely, that grace which had been forfeited at the Fall, that grace which is the life of God in the soul, for S. Paul says, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me":² And again, "When Christ, *Who is our Life*, shall appear."³ S. Paul teaches that we are engrafted into Christ by baptism, so that the very life of Christ becomes our life, and the life-blood of grace flows through us.

The law in regard to blood had borne witness, not only to the sanctity of human life, not only to the law of sacrifice, but to the fact—though this was hidden from the Jews—that the spiritual life, the life of God, the life of

¹ S. John vi. 53, 54.

² Gal. ii. 20.

³ Col. iii. 4.

grace, which had been forfeited at the Fall, was to be restored through the blood of Christ; that the law which forbade the drinking of blood was to be changed to the command, "This is My blood: drink ye all of it"; that the life of grace, which had been forfeited, was to be restored by the blood of Christ, which was to be the food of the soul; "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life."

How wonderfully all things conspire to one end—man's redemption! How wonderfully all God's revelation in the Old Testament prepares man for this! Life had been forfeited by sin, and that higher life is restored through the blood of Christ, for the life is in the blood, and whoso eateth the flesh and drinketh the blood of Christ hath eternal life.

In addition to its forming part of the Old Testament lesson for this morning's service, this subject has an appropriateness for Quinquagesima Sunday, for we are standing upon the threshold of Lent, and from one point of view Lent is the preparation for keeping Good Friday and Easter, the commemoration of our Lord's blood-shedding upon the Cross, of His resurrection from the dead, and the gift to us of eternal life.

There is always a danger in regard to the fundamental doctrines of our faith, that we may become so familiar with them that we fail to realize their true relation to our spiritual life. The great events which we commemorate on Good Friday and Easter Day—the redemption of the world by the Sacrifice of the death of Christ, and His resurrection from the dead—are not only historical events, in the reality of which we absolutely believe, but they have a profound relation to our present life. It is not enough for

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us to believe that by them our Lord redeemed the world; we must go on to make an act of faith in their efficacy to supply our own present needs—the cleansing of our souls from sin by the precious blood of Christ, and the imparting to us of the gift of spiritual life through sacramental union with Christ.

Now Lent is given us, among other things, for this, that we may learn practically to apply the articles of Christian Creed to our daily life, that we may prepare ourselves to take our stand beneath the Cross on Good Friday; not as mere spectators, not only as commemorating the event by which the world was saved, but as appropriating that precious blood to the cleansing of our own souls; that we may prepare ourselves on Easter Day not only to rejoice that Christ has risen, but to rise with Him, through the power of our Easter Communion, to feed upon the Bread of Life, to drink that precious Blood, without which we can have no life in us.

We might almost venture to say that Lent is to teach us practically to realize the great law of blood-shedding, which we have been considering this morning, which had its origin in God's revelation to Noah, and had its consummation in our Lord's sacrifice on the Cross, as anticipated in His sacramental act on the evening of Maundy Thursday, and which lives on in every Eucharist, lives on in the pleading of the sacrifice, lives on in the partaking of the body and blood!

What do we need? That Christ should live in us. How is the need supplied? By feeding upon His Body, by drinking His precious Blood, for He said: The life is in the blood; drink ye all of it. Except ye eat My Flesh, and drink My Blood, ye have no life in you. "Whoso eateth My Flesh, and drinketh My Blood, hath eternal life."

Sermon XXXII.

PRAYER.

(Quinquagesima Sunday.) ✓

S. MATTHEW VII. 7.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you.”



WE may estimate the importance of prayer by the prominent place it occupies in our Lord's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, no less than two sections being devoted to instruction on prayer.

In the 6th chapter our Lord warns us against two faults which must be avoided if our prayers are to be acceptable to God. The fault of those who love to pray that they may be seen of men, that they may obtain a reputation for being religious, and so have their reward in the praise of men. And the fault of those who use vain repetitions, and think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. He then proceeds to give as a pattern of prayer, that prayer which we use so often, the “Our Father.”

In the 7th chapter our Lord returns again to the subject of prayer, exhorting His disciples to be earnest and persevering in it, to ask, to seek, to knock. These three words representing advancing degrees of earnestness in prayer. He then goes on to assure them of the good will of their father in heaven and of His readiness to “give good things to them that ask Him.”

We are standing to-day upon the threshold of Lent, the great prayer-time of the Church's year; and since much

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of the fruits of keeping Lent will depend upon the earnestness of our prayers, it will be wise for us to consider carefully some of the conditions of good prayer, and some of the faults by which prayer is often hindered.

Prayer has been defined as "the uplifting of the soul to GOD." As the Psalmist says, "Unto Thee, O Lord, will I lift up my soul."¹ It is the link which connects us continually with GOD; it is the ladder by which we climb up to heaven; it is the very atmosphere of the spiritual life; for we may as well expect to find a living man who does not breathe, as a living Christian who does not pray.

Prayer has been called "Religion in action." It is the special exercise of the virtue of hope, the link between faith and love. Faith is the foundation of prayer, for "whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive";² and hope is the ladder by which faith, through prayer, ascends to love. Do you desire to love GOD? Do you complain that your love is cold? Pray, exercise the virtue of hope, and the flame of divine love will spring up in your heart.

We said that prayer was "the uplifting of the soul to GOD." It is a movement from beneath—mind rising to Mind, dependence to Omnipotence—from the depths to the heights. "Out of the deep have I called unto Thee, O Lord: Lord, hear my voice."³ This is the utterance of prayer. Out of the deep of my nothingness, out of the deep of my need, to the height of Thine Omnipotence, to the height of Thy Mercy!

An act of prayer must always consist of three parts. There must be the one who makes it—the suppliant—Him to Whom it is made, and the link or communication between the two. We see all these parts mystically repre-

¹ Psa'm xxv. 1.

² S. Matt. xxi. 22.

³ Psalm cxxx. 1.

sented in Jacob's dream at Beth-el. There was the patriarch on the earth beneath, the Lord God above, and the ladder of intercourse between the two. For while this dream is primarily a type of the Incarnation, it also mystically sets forth an act of prayer.

It is of great importance to good prayer that we should realize our own dependence and GOD's Omnipotence, what we are and what He is. It would save us from many mistakes in prayer if we did so. Some people pray to GOD as though they had a right to demand of Him certain favours or gifts. They forget their dependence on Him. Their prayer is spoiled by pride. Others pray to GOD in a half-hearted way, doubting either His power or His willingness to help, forgetting that He is Omnipotent, and that He is Love; that because of His Omnipotence He can help to the uttermost, and because of His Love He is sure to send us such aid as we may need. Their prayer is spoiled by want of faith.

With yet another class the fault is in the prayer itself, in the link between us and GOD, either that our prayer does not fulfil the conditions of good prayer, or that it is spoiled by certain positive flaws either in its manner or matter. The very fact that we say our prayers so often makes it easy to fall into bad habits, unless we are watchful.

It is helpful each Lent to take up some one duty and to try to perform it perfectly; first investigating how we have fulfilled the duty in the past, searching out defects, and considering in what way we can do this duty better.

I would suggest this Lent that we should take the duty of prayer, our primary duty to GOD, upon the fulfilment of which almost all our spiritual life depends; that we should examine ourselves in regard to our prayers, and see where we have failed; that we should try to find out where we

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have fallen into slovenly habits of prayer, what there is amiss in the manner of our prayers, or in their matter. And finally that we should make some rule of prayer for Lent which would aid us to correct these faults and to acquire that best of all habits, the habit of good prayer. To help you in this let us consider :

- I. Some of the conditions of good prayer;
- II. Some of the principal causes of bad prayer; and,
- III. Some of the reasons why we should pray.

I. The conditions of good prayer are chiefly four :

1. First, *faith*. A prayer which is wanting in faith is wanting in the principal element of prayer. Our Lord tells us, "Whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive." But the important word in the promise is "believing." We must have faith in God's Omniscience, that God hears our prayer, knows our needs, knows exactly what is best for us. We must have faith, too, in God's Omnipotence, that He not only knows our needs, but that He has the power to help us. If we believe that God is Omnipotent, we cannot doubt this. And then we must have faith in God's Love, that He is ready to help us, that He is our Father in heaven, Who loves us better than any earthly father can love us.

Our Blessed Lord reminds us of this in the passage from which our text is taken, when He says, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask Him?"¹

Without faith we cannot please God, for without faith we cannot perform our first duty to God, the duty of prayer.

2. The next condition of good prayer is that it should be

¹ S. Matt. vii. 11.

fervent. S. James tells us that "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."¹ And S. Paul, writing to the Colossians, speaks of Epaphras as a servant of Christ who labours *fervently* in prayers for them.² Fervent prayer, of course, means earnest prayer, prayer in which the whole soul is lifted up to God. Such prayer is quite inconsistent with *yielding* to wandering thoughts, although not incompatible with distractions which are not our own fault. We are told of our Lord in Gethsemane that "being in an agony He prayed more earnestly."³

Christ's prayer in the Garden was full of difficulty; He was alone, without the sympathy of His disciples, for which His human nature craved; He was facing all the horrors of His Passion and death; and He had upon Him the sins of the whole world. There was much to distract Him, therefore, and make His prayer difficult. But He struggled to pray, struggled so tremendously that its effect was manifest in His body by the sweat of blood. But in spite of the struggle, indeed because of the struggle, we are told "He prayed more earnestly," that is, more fervently.

A quaint writer, speaking of the conditions of good prayer, makes fervency its principal element. He says, "God does not care for the arithmetic of your prayers, how many they are; nor for their geometry, how long they are; nor for their rhetoric, how eloquently they are expressed. All God cares for is the fervency of your prayers, that they be earnest prayers."

3. The third element of good prayer is *resignation*. We must always say, "Thy Will be done," for we must ever bear in mind that the end of all prayer is to fulfil God's Will, not our own. We do not pray in order that we may

¹ S. James v. 16.

² Cf. Col. iv. 12.

³ S. Luke xxii. 44.

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change God's purpose in regard to us, but that we may carry it out. God often wills to give us good things, or to help us in temptation or adversity, if we co-operate with Him by prayer; but if we do not pray, we—so to speak—hinder God's purpose and prevent Him from helping us or bestowing upon us His bounty. We must pray with resignation, because we believe in the love of God, that He is our Father Who loves us; because we believe in the wisdom of God, that He knows what is best for us; because we absolutely trust God; and therefore without hesitation, while praying with faith and earnestness, we shall add to every prayer an act of resignation, "Not my will, but Thine, be done."

4. The last condition of good prayer which we shall notice to-day is *perseverance*. When we have learned to pray with resignation, we must go on to pray with perseverance. Christ spoke a parable, that of the importunate Widow and the unjust Judge, to teach us "that men ought always to pray, and not to faint."¹ And S. Luke, in giving us the passage from the Sermon on the Mount, which we have taken as our text, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you,"² prefaces it with the parable of the Friend at midnight, to teach us to pray with importunity.

II. Let us now turn to some of the causes of bad prayer, to some of the bad habits which creep into our prayers through carelessness.

1. The first, and the worst, is want of preparation. How often we throw ourselves upon our knees in God's presence to say our prayers, without any thought of what we are going to do, without any act of recollection or reverence! If we were entering the presence chamber of

¹S. Luke xviii. 1.

²S. Luke xi. 9.

an earthly monarch, or even of some great man, we should probably pause before we entered the room to collect our thoughts and to consider how we should address him. Surely, in entering the Presence Chamber of the King of kings, we should pause and make an act of recollection, we should try to realize how great is the dignity of Him to Whom we speak!

It is a very good practice always to make an act of faith in God's presence before beginning our prayers. It need not take more than a minute. If we were to strive to collect ourselves, and to say thoughtfully and reverently the invocation, "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen," it would help us. Thus—

"In the Name of the Father"—I am going to speak to my Father in heaven, Who loves to hear and answer my prayers.

"In the Name of the Son"—It is through the merits of Jesus Christ, my Lord, that my prayer gains its efficacy. It is because He ever liveth to make intercession for me in heaven, that I venture with faith to offer my prayers on earth.

"In the Name of the Holy Ghost"—Not only have I in heaven a great Intercessor, but in my own soul the Spirit maketh intercession for me, with groanings which cannot be uttered; the Holy Ghost helps my infirmity, teaching me both what to pray for, and how to pray.¹

Let us try, this Lent, always to begin our prayers with some act of recollection, putting ourselves in the conscious presence of God, and we shall find that our prayers will be more reverent and more earnest.

2. The next cause of bad prayers is irreverence of posture. While prayer is an act of the spiritual part of man,

¹ Cf. Rom. viii. 26.

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it depends—as all acts of religion do—very much upon man's body. Few people can pray well in an easy, lounging attitude. In our Lord's prayer in Gethsemane we find that He kneeled on the hard, cold ground. And surely there is something very incongruous in the Christian who says his prayers with his head perhaps buried in the bed-clothes. Such a posture conduces to sleepiness, not to that watchfulness which must always accompany good prayer. It is a helpful practice, when we feel sleepy at our prayers, to kneel quite upright, in a somewhat constrained attitude, and the constraint upon our body will often help us to control our wandering thoughts and to overcome the feeling of sleepiness.

3. A third cause of bad prayer is petulance of petition. Some people pray to God in the spirit of a spoiled child, peevishly asking for the things upon which it has set its heart. We should be very careful to frame our prayers with a realization of our dependence upon God, for this realization of dependence is indeed one of our most prevailing pleas with God.

4. The last cause of bad prayer is thankless forgetfulness of what we have asked in prayer. If we have asked for grace to resist some temptation, or to bear some trial during the day, we should go forth from our prayer with a thankful remembrance that, having asked in prayer, the grace will be given, and that we must be on our watch to use it when the temptation assaults us, or when the trial has to be met. So often we let the whole substance of our prayer pass out of our mind, and at the moment when we need the grace—and indeed, perhaps, have the grace—we fail to use it, just through want of recollection. Remember that prayer is a solemn act, and that if we have

asked God to give us grace, we must watch to use that grace when the opportunity offers.

III. It may help us, too, to reflect on some reasons why we should pray :

1. First, because our Lord has taught us to pray. This is so evident, that we need not dwell upon the occasions when He enjoined prayer upon His disciples.

2. Then again, because He set us an example of prayer in His own life. His life was full of labour, full of toil, and yet He seems never to have allowed His prayers to be crowded out. Sometimes He arose a great while before it was day, that He might say His prayers before work began.¹ On other occasions when he had to work late into the evening, He spent the night in prayer.² But His prayers were never omitted.

3. Yet again, because of His promise, " Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in My Name, He will give it to you." ³ " Ask, and it shall be given you ; seek, and ye shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

¹ Cf. S. Mark i. 35.

² Cf. S. Matt, xiv. 23.

³ S. John xvi. 23.

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Sermon XXXIII.

THE DANGERS OF FASTING.

(Ash Wednesday.)

ISAIAH LVIII. 1.

"Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins."

 HERE are two classes of people to whom Lent brings no blessing,—those who do not keep it at all, and those who, while they observe it with outward formalities and even with strictness, yet do not keep it in the spirit of true penitence. It is to the latter of these classes that God addresses a message of warning and rebuke in the chapter of Isaiah which we have read as the first lesson for this morning's service.

The strong expression in the first verse implies the difficulty of arousing the self-righteous, of reaching the self-deceived,—“Cry aloud, . . . lift up thy voice.” The word used in the original signifies speaking from the throat, with all the power of the voice, raising it like the hunting or signal horn, so as to drown all other sounds. The message of Jehovah continues thus, “Show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins. Yet they seek Me daily, and delight to know My ways, as a nation that did righteousness, and forsook not the ordinance of their God: they ask of Me the ordinances of justice; they take delight in approaching to God.”

I. What a strange picture is here drawn!—a nation seemingly most religious, not only fulfilling the *ordinances* of religion, but delighting in them, and yet absolutely with-

out spiritual life. This character is described in other parts of Isaiah, notably in the first chapter, and is the character which is most difficult to change. Unfortunately, it is by no means rare, and is found among ourselves to-day as it was among the Jews in Isaiah's time.

What is the character which Isaiah is describing? We must carefully bear in mind that it is not the conscious hypocrite, but the self-righteous, the self-deceived man, who is here brought before us. It is not the man who is wearing the garb of religion in order to deceive his fellow-men, but who all the time knows himself to be a hypocrite.

On the contrary, this man is conscious only of virtue, he delights in approaching God, religion is the interest of his life. He is the prototype of the Pharisee in the temple, who "stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess."¹ His sin is self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, self-deception.

The Pharisees of our Lord's day, like those Jews in the time of Isaiah, to whom this rebuke is addressed, looked upon the externals of religion as its important part, and entirely ignored its life in the soul. They mistook the spirit of formalism for the spirit of religion. They wondered that their prayers were not heard, that their fasts were apparently not regarded by God. They could see no cause for change in their own religious life, and reproached God, saying, "Wherefore have we fasted, . . . and Thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge?" For them, religion consisted in certain acts which had a covenanted efficacy, quite independent of the spirit in which they were performed.

¹S. Luke xviii. 11, 12.

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Does not this class exist among ourselves to-day?—men who make their religion consist in Church work and Church Services, who take a real interest, for instance, in the welfare of their parish, in its various agencies for parochial work, but whose life is quite untouched by the spirit of religion.

Such men would be indignant at being told they were hypocrites. They certainly are not consciously such. They would reply, very much in the words of the Jews in Isaiah, that they delighted in going to Church, were most careful in keeping its rules—observing the festivals, for instance, and perhaps keeping Lent. And yet the purpose of religion, the fellowship of the soul with God, the life of prayer, the spirit of trustful reliance upon God, is absolutely unknown to them.

It is to such that God sends this message of warning, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” What sins? The sins which God hates most; sins of self-righteousness, of self-deception, the sins of those who honour God with their lips, while their hearts are far from Him. God demands external worship as the *manifestation* of the religion of the heart, not as a *substitute* for it.

In the lesson for to-day’s service, after this general warning, God singles out one religious duty for consideration—the duty of fasting—pointing out the dangers which accompany it, and which, if yielded to, render it of no avail in His sight; and teaching also the way in which fasting may be made acceptable to Him and of real value to the soul.

II. First, Jehovah points out what was wrong in the fasting of His people.

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1. The *motive* of their fasting was wrong. They looked upon fasting as constituting a claim upon GOD, rather than as a help to penitence. "Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not? wherefore have we afflicted our soul, and Thou takest no knowledge?" They did not realize that the end of fasting was to subdue self, and that to consider fasting as constituting a claim upon GOD, was the spirit of self-righteousness, rather than of penitence.

2. The *method* of their fasting was wrong, as GOD points out, "Behold in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours." A better translation of this would be, "Behold, in the day of your fast ye carry on business, and exact labours." (That is, make others work.) The fast which is referred to was probably the great Day of Atonement, the only public fast in the Jewish Church. And on this day, as on the Sabbath, no work was to be done. But while observing the ritual of the Atonement, they seem to have attended to many unnecessary affairs, and perhaps made their servants work.

How frequently this is the case in our own day. People who keep Lent themselves are often very inconsiderate of those in their employment. In carrying on their business they do much which is not necessary, and exact from others a measure of labour which leaves these no time or opportunity for any Lenten observances.

3. The *accompaniment* of their fasting was wrong. GOD says, "Behold, ye fast for strife and debate." It is not quite certain what is meant by this. It has been, however, suggested by a great commentator that it may be taken of that irritability which is often an accompaniment of fasting. This is perhaps a natural consequence of the weakness engendered by hunger, but, if it be given way to, it entirely destroys the efficacy of the fast. Our fasting

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should be attended by a spirit of patience and gentleness; irritability is quite out of keeping with penitence. Others have thought that the "strife and debate" in this passage may be interpreted of a spirit of controversy which belongs often to self-righteousness, those who fast criticizing those who do not, and provoking argument in regard to this duty.

GOD says, "Ye shall not fast as ye do this day, to make your voice to be heard on high." The meaning of this is, "If ye fast in this manner, the voice of your prayer will never reach the Throne of Grace."

III. After having shown what was wrong in their fasting, GOD proceeds to indicate the manner in which they may make their fasting acceptable to Him and of value to their own soul.

1. Fasting should be accompanied with penitence. It is not enough for a man to observe outward conditions of mourning and penitence, "to afflict his soul . . . to bow down his head as a bulrush, and to spread sackcloth and ashes under him." This may be the expression of interior penitence, and then it is valuable and acceptable to GOD; but if it be not accompanied by proofs of penitence, it is worthless. And the proof which GOD in this passage requires is a real conquest of sin and sinful habits. "Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens?" Penitence is not only sorrow for sin, but includes the forsaking of sin, the breaking of its bonds; and freedom from sin will follow sincere confession and firm purpose of amendment.

2. Again, fasting should be associated with alms-giving, that is, with works of charity. Our Lord in His Sermon on the Mount thus associates it when He says, "When thou doest thine alms," "when thou prayest," "when ye

fast.”¹ And in His message to the Jews He says of the fast that He has chosen, “Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?”

Lent for us should be not only a time of fasting, but also of works of charity, of real alms-giving. Our self-denial must be not only in food, but in money also, money spent either in relieving the poor, or for the work of the Church.

3. Then, fasting must always be attended by prayer. This, as we have seen, is implied in the Sermon on the Mount, and we find it also in the chapter of Isaiah which we are considering; for GOD says of the fast that He has chosen, “Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and He shall say, Here I am.” GOD promises in this passage especially to hear prayer which accompanies fasting, if it be true fasting. There is no duty which belongs more to Lent than the duty of prayer. More opportunities of public worship should be sought, more occasions of private prayer should be used.

What a glorious promise ends these words of warning! “Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rereward.” In proportion as we keep a good Lent shall we realize this promise. For some on Easter Day the light will indeed break forth as the morning! They will not only commemorate the Resurrection of their Lord, but will rise with Him. Their health will spring forth speedily—the health of their soul, healed of all its diseases—and righteousness will go before them, and the glory of the

¹ S. Matt. vi. 2, 5, 16.

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Lord will be their rereward—or, as it may be translated, will gather them up. Surrounded by His light they will be safe from the attacks of their foes, and happy in the fellowship of their Risen Lord.

We must fast with Christ in the wilderness this Lent if we are to rejoice with Christ in the gladness of Easter Day. We must know the fellowship of His sufferings, and be made conformable unto His death, if we are to experience the power of His Resurrection.¹

Sermon XXXIV.

THE DUTY OF FASTING. ✓

(Ash Wednesday.)

S. MARK II. 20.

"But the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken away from them, and then shall they fast in those days."



ASH WEDNESDAY is one of the two great fast-days of the Church, the other being Good Friday. Ash Wednesday is also the first day of Lent, that season set apart by the Church for fasting and prayer in memory of our Lord's forty days' fast in the wilderness, and in preparation for Good Friday and Easter, when we commemorate His death and glorious resurrection.

As the first day of Lent, Ash Wednesday was called "Caput jejunii," "the head of the fast." In both lessons, as well as in the Epistle and Gospel, we have brought be-

¹ Cf. Phil. iii. 10.

fore us the duty of fasting. We are warned against the dangers that sometimes accompany it, and we have pointed out the conditions which must be fulfilled that our fasting may be helpful to us and pleasing in the sight of God.

I. First, we may notice that fasting finds a place not only in revelation, but in natural religion. It would be difficult to find any system of religion in which fasting of some sort was not enjoined. From this we may infer that it is one of the fundamental religious ideas implanted by God in human nature.

It has, however, not only the authority of natural religion, but of revelation, for we find both in the Old and New Testaments that fasting is enjoined and practised.

As the duty of fasting occupies so prominent a place in the Church's teaching to-day, it is only right that we should give it our careful attention.

According to the Mosaic law, there was only one public fast of obligation among the Jews—the fast of the great Day of Atonement—but we find voluntary fasting, as an act of devotion and a help to penitence and prayer, so common among the more religious Jews of our Lord's day, that the Pharisee in the temple says, "I fast twice in the week,"¹ and in the Old Testament there are frequent references to fasting in connection with penitence.

There were many great principles of religion which passed from Judaism into Christianity because they were fundamental religious principles, and fasting was one of these. It is evident that our Lord did not mean to abrogate it, since in the Sermon on the Mount He puts it on a level with prayer and alms-giving, and in warning His disciples against the dangers of ostentation or hypocrisy in connec-

¹ S. Luke xviii. 12.

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tion with fasting He enjoins it as a duty, and attaches to it, if rightly performed, the promise of a reward from our heavenly Father.

Then again, in the passage from which we have taken our text, while explaining the reason why His disciples did not make voluntary fasting so much a part of their religious life as did the disciples of S. John the Baptist, our Lord adds that on His departure "they shall fast," thus positively enjoining it.

But Christ not only teaches the duty of fasting by precept, but also by example, as we are reminded in the Collect, "For our sakes He fasted forty days and forty nights." The Church therefore, following her Lord's precept and example, has commanded her children to fast, by giving a table of fasts in the Prayer Book, and by teaching us to pray in the Collect for the First Sunday in Lent, "O Lord, Who for our sake didst fast forty days and forty nights; Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness."

There can then be no possible doubt that fasting is of obligation, not only upon all Church people, but upon all Christians; and indeed we find that it has been practised, almost without exception, by all holy men, to whatever part of the Church they may have belonged. It behooves us then, on this first day of Lent, if we have not done so before, to consider and to decide what measure of fasting and abstinence we can and will observe this Lent.

II. While fasting in its strict sense refers to abstinence from food, in its more general sense it includes all acts of mortification and self-denial, both exterior and interior, by which we strive to gain the victory over our lower nature, and by self-discipline to become fit for the service of

Christ. Our Blessed Lord not only tells us that we must take up our cross if we are to be His disciples, but that we must deny ourselves, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me."¹ And each of the Synoptics records this in almost the same words.

There is an evident distinction between taking up the cross and denying oneself. The taking up of the cross refers to the cheerful acceptance of the trials and sorrows which God's providence puts into our life. The denying of ourselves implies something more than this—the voluntary seeking out means for self-discipline, opportunities for mortification of our body or of our will. Soldiers have need to be trained and disciplined, and it is by self-denial that we become good soldiers of Jesus Christ.

It is evident, therefore, that in making our rule for Lenten fasting we must not confine ourselves only to abstinence in the matter of food. This is enjoined, but would be of little value if it were not accompanied by other exercises of self-discipline.

We may take, for instance, our thoughts, and we shall find in the sphere of thought abundant opportunity for real self-mortification.

What are our principal sins of thought? Are we given to criticizing others—in thought if not in word? Perhaps in both there is an opportunity for self-denial. We must mortify those thoughts by checking them the moment we are conscious of them, and to do this continually will go a long way towards really killing the bad habit, for this is the meaning of the word "mortify," to make dead.

Or do we give way to uncharitable thoughts, brooding over slights and wrongs which we have suffered? We

¹ S. Mark viii. 34 ; cf. S. Matt. xvi. 24, and S. Luke ix. 23.

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are told by our Lord that the condition of forgiveness is that we *from our hearts* should forgive everyone his brother their trespasses.¹ Brooding over wrongs makes it very difficult really to forgive. Here, then, is another opportunity for self-discipline.

Again, are we troubled by covetous thoughts, thoughts of discontent with our lot in life, constant desires for that which we cannot obtain? Such habits of thought are very common, but need to be mortified, to be killed. There are many other sins of thought to which may be applied the rule of interior self-denial, and that not only during Lent but at all times.

Then, too, there is the "will" which needs mortification. How many things we wish to do which are perhaps wrong, and others which, while not actually wrong, are very undesirable. Mortification of *will* should be included under our rule of fasting.

Lastly, let us keep well before us the purpose of fasting. It is well set forth in the Collect which we have quoted, "Give us grace to use such abstinence, that, our flesh being subdued to the Spirit, we may ever obey Thy godly motions in righteousness, and true holiness." The purpose of fasting is that our flesh may be subdued to the Spirit, and by "flesh" we mean not merely the body but all that belongs to the lower nature—worldliness, quite as much as the more direct sins of the flesh.

These are to be brought into subjection to the spiritual part of man, that part in which, in the Christian, the Holy Spirit holds sway, so that our lives may be dominated by the Holy Spirit, not by the world, not by the mere desires of the flesh. This is the great purpose of fasting, that by subduing our lower nature we may be more ready to obey

¹ Cf. S. Matt. xviii. 35.

the godly motions which proceed from Christ through the operation of His Holy Spirit in us.

We see, then, that fasting is not only a matter of obedience to a rule of the Church, but that it is also a great, and indeed a fundamental, principle of religion. It is an attack upon that part of our nature in which the enemy of our souls endeavours to entrench himself. It is the means by which we reduce to obedience our unruly soldiers, not only the passions, but all that belongs to the life of the senses; for the senses are the avenues by which the world approaches and gains entrance into the soul, and strives to gain possession of and to rule the whole man. Our lower nature, which ought to be the obedient servant of the higher, often becomes its master; and even where this is not the case, is a most rebellious and unwilling servant. It needs to be disciplined, to be reduced to subjection, to be taught obedience; and fasting in its broadest sense is the means by which this is best accomplished, and the flesh subdued to the Spirit.

In many respects Lent is the battle-field of the Christian year. One of the foes against which we have to go forth to war is the lower nature—the flesh—and the weapon with which we must conquer is the weapon which the Church to-day calls us to take up and use vigorously—the weapon of fasting.

We must be careful to use this weapon rightly, for our Lord warns us, in the Gospel for the day, that the weapon of fasting may sometimes injure us more than it injures our foe. He gives us as an example, “fasting to be seen of men”; fasting, that is, from pride instead of from penitence and humility. Then our fasting does us more harm than good. We must watch against this; we must fast without ostentation, to be seen, not of men, but of God.

And the reward we should look for in our fasting is not the praise of men, but such a real conquest over self as may enable us to serve GOD more faithfully.

We must remember also that our Lord associates with fasting, in the Sermon on the Mount, prayer and alms-giving. To fast without prayer will be of little use. Fasting is a great help to prayer, as it is to penitence.

And then in the first lesson for the day we are warned that our fasting must have its issue in deeds of alms-giving, in dealing our bread to the hungry, in bringing the poor to our house, in clothing the naked, and in other works of charity.¹ This is the fast that GOD chooses, this is the fast that GOD rewards.

May you so fast this Lent that you may gain a great victory, for the glory of GOD, and the advance of your own spiritual life.

Sermon XXXV.

LOT'S WIFE.

(The First Sunday in Lent.)

GENESIS XIX. 26.

"But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."



ALL the persons mentioned in Holy Scripture, there is only one whom we are expressly charged to remember, and that by our Lord Himself; and of this one we know neither her name, nor her nation. She appears before us but once, and her story, so far as it is recorded, is summed up in one act, which,

¹ Cf. Isaiah lviii. 6, 7.

though apparently a simple act, is fraught with disastrous consequences to herself. This act is held up as a warning to us by our Lord Himself when He says in the Gospel, "Remember Lot's wife."¹

To us, as to His hearers, the story of Lot's wife is very familiar. But had not our Lord called attention to it in this striking way, we should probably have passed it over without noticing the great lesson it contains.

The circumstances under which Christ uttered the warning "Remember Lot's wife" were as follows:

He was telling His disciples of the second coming or revelation of the Son of Man. After speaking of its suddenness, that "as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven, shineth unto the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of Man be in His day," He goes on to tell of the condition of the world at His appearing. He says, "As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man. . . . Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; but the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of Man is revealed." And the passage ends with the injunction, "Remember Lot's wife."

There is something very awful in the epochs Christ chooses as illustrative of the condition of the world at His second coming—"as it was in the days of Noe," when the flood came; "as it was in the days of Lot," when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed! And surely the conclusion which our Lord draws, and the lesson which He briefly inculcates in the words "Remember Lot's wife,"

¹ S. Luke xvii. 32.

demand on our part the most serious consideration, the most diligent and careful thought.

I. What was the sin of Lot's wife? She lived with her husband in a city of great luxury, probably of considerable wealth, certainly of great wickedness. In this at least she was like many of us; for luxury, and wealth, and wickedness, are no strangers to our age. The destruction of the city of Sodom on account of its wickedness was revealed to Lot, and he was exhorted to leave the place with his wife and children, lest he should be "consumed in the iniquity of the city." And while he lingered, the angels laid hold upon his hand to hurry him forth, and said to him, "Escape for thy life; look not behind thee, neither stay thou in all the plain." And we are further told that the sun was risen upon the earth when Lot entered into Zoar, the city of refuge and safety, "But his wife looked back from behind him, and she became a pillar of salt."

The expression "from behind him" indicates that she was the last of the party, and as the sun rose in its glory and shone upon that beautiful plain where she had lived in luxury and pleasure, she turned around, and in spite of the angels' warning looked behind her, at the home she loved so well, and the judgment of GOD overtook her, and she became a pillar of salt, a witness and a warning to GOD's people for all time.

What was the manner of her death, we need scarcely spend time in inquiring, since it is not revealed. Since the time of Aben-Ezra it has been suggested that as the last of the party she was overcome by the sulphurous or bituminous shower which destroyed Sodom, that she fell, and afterwards became encrusted with the salt deposits for which the neighbourhood of the Dead Sea is still so noted. Indeed, there are in that neighbourhood so many pillars

of salt even to this day, that some have been pointed out as the pillar of Lot's wife. We may, however, be sure that it is not the *manner* of her death, but the *cause* of it—her sin—which our Lord would have us bear in mind. What was it?

It was only one act, indeed only a look, and yet its consequences were so awful! How frequently in life a crisis comes, when one step decides our future! We often notice it in business life; one mistake made, one opportunity neglected, and the consequences are irretrievable. It is so in the spiritual life, though, perhaps, less obvious to us. But that one step which decides the future, like every important step in life, has probably been prepared for by a long, though unrecognized, tendency in that direction.

In the case of Lot's wife there was no thought of returning to the burning city; she was too much frightened for that; but while driven from it by fear, her heart was still there. Circumstances might oblige her to live in another place, but her *home*, her heart, was in Sodom; her outer life might be altered, but her *character* was unchanged; and that character was the result of many years of residence in Sodom.

Consider then what was implied by that looking back behind her at Sodom. It implied that she did not value, did not desire, what was before her, even though she was ready to accept it as an unpleasant necessity from which she could not escape. What she longed for, what she looked back upon, was that which she was leaving, that which she had lost.

That look was a prophecy of what her future would have been had she reached Zoar, of what her past had done towards forming her character. It told how she had learned, by neglect of God, not only *not* to hate her life

in Sodom, but at last even to love it. Her trembling feet might bear her body in safety to Zoar, but her heart was still in Sodom. And had she reached Zoar, the sin from which she was parted by circumstances would probably have revived in her affections, in her thoughts—as sin which we have forsaken often does, unless we are truly repentant—and she would have lived her life over again in day-dreams of the past !

II. If we had to sum up the state of Lot's wife in a sentence, we might say that she was *convinced* but not *converted*; convinced in her intellect that it was impossible to stay in Sodom—the danger was too great—that it was impossible to return there, for the city was destroyed; but her will was unchanged, her affections unaltered.

What is conversion? It is a turning of the will to God; and it differs altogether from a mere change of opinion. We may be thoroughly convinced in our mind that a particular course of life is all wrong, that it is frightfully dangerous, and therefore that for selfish reasons it must be given up. But this is not conversion.

Conversion is when the conclusion of the intellect is taken hold of by the will and the affections, and bears fruit in a changed life; not only in giving up what is wrong, but in turning away from it, and hating it, and in setting our faces to do what is right. This is what was lacking in Lot's wife.

And are there none in our own day like her in the Church of Christ? Are there not some who dwell discontentedly and of necessity in Zoar, because they cannot help it, but who wish they were still in Sodom? Are there not some who grumble at the hardship of having to live in a wretched, little, provincial city, apart from the world, without the interests of fashion, or chances for gossip, or

scandal, or anything that makes worldly life delightful; without opportunities for the display of wealth, or popularity, or power, or influence, such as life in a great city used to afford them? These persons spend their time, not in looking forward to the future, but in looking longingly back upon the past. They do not mean to return to that past, perhaps they have no opportunity of doing so; but their treasure is there, and so their heart is there also.

This Lent the message comes to us all, "Remember Lot's wife"; for this holy season calls us to a separation from the world for a time, that we may look into our spiritual life, that we may examine the condition of our souls in regard to God. Let us begin by asking the question, "Where is our heart?" Or, rather, "Where is our treasure?" For our Lord has told us that where our treasure is, there our heart will be also. Are we laying up treasure in this world, treasure of work, or of wealth, treasure of ambition or of influence? Is our interest here, or is it in heaven?

In the Epistle to the Philippians we find a passage in which S. Paul reveals to us the very motto of his life, a life which stands out in the most complete contrast to that of Lot's wife. He says, "This one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."¹ His treasure was in heaven, for his treasure was Christ. His heart was there also, and he tells us that he ever set his face heavenward and forgot those things which were behind.

Again let us ask the question, "Am I converted, or only convinced? Does Christianity dominate my will and my

¹ Phil. iii. 13, 14.

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affections, or only my intellect? Do I accept the claims of Christ, merely because I cannot escape them; or, do I, with my whole heart and will, choose Christ as my Master and my All? "

We find in the Gospel for last Sunday a very good motto for Lent in the words our Blessed Lord addressed to His disciples, "Behold, we go up to Jerusalem." ¹ And on another occasion we are told, that "when the time was come that He should be received up, He stedfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." ²

Which way are we looking? Stedfastly towards Jerusalem, waiting for our Lord's coming? Or are we looking back behind us, upon the world which we have left for awhile this Lent, waiting till Lent be over, that we may go back to our ordinary life of pleasure and worldliness? Which way are we looking? Christ is certainly coming, and He sends to us this message, "Remember Lot's wife."

Sermon XXXVI. ✓

THE COST OF BEING A CHRISTIAN.

(The First Sunday in Lent.)

S. MATTHEW X. 34.

✓. "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword."



ONE of the distinguishing characteristics of Christ's teaching is its transparent honesty. It tells not only of the glorious rewards of eternity, of the happiness of heaven—of which we may have a foretaste in this life—but it constantly draws atten-

¹S. Luke xviii. 31.

²S. Luke ix. 51.

tion to the difficulties to be met, the opposition to be overcome, the labour to be endured, the battle to be fought, before we can attain the crown. Our Lord obtains no disciples by false pretences. He warns all that there is no way to heaven's rest but by toil and struggle. He tells us that no man can be His disciple who is not willing to take up his cross and follow Him.

There are many who think of Christ's service as an escape from the strife of earth, an immediate possession of the peace of heaven. To such our Lord says, in the words of our text, "Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword." He calls on us to count the cost of His service, not that we may reject it, but that we may meet with courage the difficulties which we find in our path, that in enrolling ourselves as His soldiers we may be prepared to fight for Him, that in becoming His servants we may be ready to work for Him.

Again and again we are warned of the cost involved in being a Christian. To a certain scribe, who in a burst of enthusiasm said, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," Jesus replied, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head."¹ The fact that the man was a scribe implies that he had been accustomed at least to the comforts of life, that he was not like the Galilæan peasants, who in following Christ had little to sacrifice. So our Lord said to him, Count the cost; "the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Are you prepared for a life of hardship such as this?

Then, how often He uttered the words of warning, "Whosoever will come after Me, let him deny himself,

¹ S. Matt. viii. 19, 20.

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and take up his cross, and follow Me.”¹ We find this recorded twice in S. Matthew, twice in S. Luke, and once in S. Mark’s Gospel. The cross is the banner of His kingdom; none can follow it who are not willing to suffer.

So, even in the Sermon on the Mount Christ warns them that “strait is the gate, and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.”² And in the passage we have taken for our text He puts the same doctrine under a different form, when He says, “I came not to send peace, but a sword.”

Nothing can possibly be clearer than this, that if we enter Christ’s service we must expect labour, toil, and struggle.

I. These words have sometimes been compared with the passage in S. Luke, where our Lord says, “I am come to send fire on the earth”;³ and they are alike at least in the image suggested by the word translated in both passages “to send” (*βαλεῖν*). It really means “to cast.” In S. Luke it suggests the casting of a firebrand on to the earth; in our text, the casting of a sword.

But before we proceed let us observe the occasion on which these words were spoken. The 10th chapter of S. Matthew records the calling of the twelve disciples and the sending of them forth upon their first mission. Our Lord first gives them somewhat full directions for their external ministry. Then He warns them what they are to expect—opposition—the privilege of a fellowship with their Master in suffering. After which He says these words, “Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.”

Yet peace, surely, is the end of our Lord’s work, for at

¹ S. Mark viii. 34; *c/f.* also S. Matt. x. 38; xvi. 24; S. Luke ix. 23; xiv. 27.

² S. Matt. vii. 14.

³ S. Luke xii. 49.

His birth angels sang at Bethlehem, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men." Yes, peace is the *end* for which Christ came into the world, but the sword is the *means* by which peace is to be won, for "peace" is one of those words which connotes its opposite—war, just as darkness implies light. We can hardly speak of a nation being at peace, without suggesting to the mind that once that nation had known the miseries of war. Indeed peace in the natural order is always the result of war, or at least of preparation for war. Nations now at peace have been through periods of warfare, and as a rule the peace they enjoy is the direct fruit of a victory won upon the battlefield.

And what is true of the natural order seems to be also true in the spiritual sphere, for we read in the Book of Revelation, "There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven."¹ Now, all is peace in heaven; but once, when Lucifer and his angels rebelled, there was war even there.

So, too, of Good Friday and Easter Day, the sword has to precede the gift of peace. On Easter Day our Lord appears to His disciples, saying, "Peace be unto you."

As we read in the last chapters of the Gospels, the story of the resurrection and of the great forty days, we cannot but be struck with the atmosphere of supernatural calm and peace which it breathes, such a contrast to the tumultuous record of the Passion which precedes it! Yes, that peace which was our Lord's Easter gift was won by Him upon the battlefield of Calvary. Calvary was the decisive battle in the great struggle between good and evil. It was

¹ Rev. xii. 7, 8.

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not the only battle, for immediately after His baptism we read that our Lord was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil, and the devil came and assaulted Him with various forms of temptation. Thrice was Satan defeated; and then, as S. Luke tells us, the devil “departed from Him for a season”;¹ only *for a season*, for he returned again and again to the attack, inciting the Jews against our Lord, and finally met his great Foe upon the field of Calvary, where the battle was fought to a finish, and the victory was won for ever! So with our Blessed Lord, the sword came before the peace, the struggle before the victory.

It has been so always in the history of the Christian Church. The first three centuries were ages of persecution, in which the very earth was drenched with the blood of the martyrs, but they ended with victory and with peace; Constantine was converted, and the world surrendered to the Church.

But not only in the first ages of Christianity has this been true, but at all times of religious revival the order has been the same—first the sword, and then peace. Unfortunately, while the Church has learned to fight against error and corruption when they have gained foothold in her midst, she has never learned the other great law of peace, that to preserve it we must keep always ready for war. After winning her battles she has too often allowed herself to be lulled into false security, and from want of watchfulness, error, luxury and corruption have crept in again and again, and it has become necessary to sound the trumpet, and to call the Church’s soldiers to wake, to draw the sword, and to fight for her Master’s honour!

II. But this is also the history of the individual soul.

¹S. Luke iv. 13.

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The only peace which is worth having in the soul must be won at the point of the sword. Peace! How we long for it. Yet the only way to obtain it is by war.

It is especially appropriate that we should consider this text on the first Sunday in Lent, when we are entering upon our annual conflict with sin and self, for Lent is the battlefield of the Christian year.

We find in Old Testament history that war was frequently renewed each spring, because on account of the severity of the winter it had to be given up at its approach. And this occurs so often, that spring is spoken of as the time "when kings go forth to battle."¹ Surely for us Lent is the time when those who are of the King's lineage and follow His banner, go forth to war for His honour and their own freedom.

The country where the battle has to be fought is, for each of us, his own soul. We are painfully conscious that the enemy has invaded our soul, has obtained a foothold in our nature, has intrenched himself in certain strongholds within us. And the first thing that we have to do in our Lenten warfare is to find out the strength of the enemy, and precisely the position in which he is intrenched. In one soul it is in the stronghold of pride, in another of sloth, in another of luxury, in another of covetousness.

Our first work, then, must be self-examination, in order that we may know just what we have to fight against; and this is not an easy work, for our enemy has the power not only of hiding himself in the chambers of our heart, but even of disguising himself under the semblance of virtues. If our self-examination is to be thorough we must seek the help of the Holy Spirit, Whose work it is to convince us of sin. Like the woman who had lost the piece

¹ 2 Sam. xi. 1; cf. 1 Chron. xx. 1.

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of silver, we must begin by lighting the candle of the Holy Spirit, that in His light we may discover the truth about ourselves. Then comes the work of driving the enemy out of our souls. This will not be accomplished without many a struggle, many a sacrifice. The means by which it is to be effected is repentance.

But repentance, as we well know, consists of three parts—contrition, confession, and satisfaction. If, therefore, we are to drive the enemy out of our souls, we must begin with contrition, with sorrowing for our sins, not because of the injury they do us, or of the evil consequences they bring upon us, but because of the injury they do our Lord, because they dishonour GOD in our souls. We must sorrow for our sins because we love GOD, and sin is an outrage of His love.

And then we must confess our sins, for we are told by the Apostle S. John, that “If we confess our sins, He [GOD] is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”¹

Then there is left, not only for Lent but for the rest of our life, the duty of satisfaction, partly negative—giving up our sins—partly positive—doing our duty as Christians, following in the steps of our Blessed Lord’s life.

This repentance is the only way by which we can really drive sin out of our souls. And we must do it thoroughly; there must be no cowardly compromise with any sin, no getting rid of temptations by yielding to them a little. We must beware, lest we settle down to that false peace against which Christ warns us, which is the result of surrender to Satan. “When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace.”² Here our Lord

¹ 1 S. John i. 9.

² S. Luke xi. 21.

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warns us against the false peace of yielding to the dominion of the evil one. If we do this, Satan will take care that we shall not be troubled with temptations, that we shall have a certain sort of peace, which will be worse and more dangerous than the most desperate struggle against sin can ever be.

Peace has its own special fruits, and one of them is the opportunity for reaping the harvest; "He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat."¹

Easter to the Christian speaks not only of peace, but of the bread of heaven, the harvest of the soul, the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ in the Holy Eucharist. While the gift in the Holy Communion is the same to all, its grace depends upon the disposition with which it is received. If we have fought a good fight during Lent, and secured a lasting peace of soul as its result, how wonderful will be the grace of our Easter Communion! For us it will be the "corn of the mighty," bestowing upon us spiritual strength, the "wine of angels," that indeed fills us with spiritual joy and gladness! Is not this worth fighting for?

Let us, then, this Lent take up the sword which our Lord casts into our midst—the sword of self-discipline—and go forth to meet our foes, to drive them out of our land, out of our souls, so that at Easter we may receive our Lord with the Eucharistic Psalm, "Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest." And having received Him, that we may enthrone Him as our King, that He may rule over that country from which by Lenten discipline we have driven forth His foes. If He rules in our hearts we shall have perfect peace, that peace

¹ Psalm cxlvii. 14.

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which only Christ can give, that peace which the world cannot take away, that peace which can only be won by the soldier of Christ.

Sermon XXXVII.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF PARENTS.

(The Second Sunday in Lent.)

GENESIS XXVII. 13.

"And his mother said unto him, Upon me be thy curse, my son : only obey my voice."

THERE are few more dramatic scenes in the Bible than that described in the twenty-seventh chapter of the Book of Genesis. There we find a drama, the action of which moves rapidly and sets forth in a few scenes the tragedy of a ruined home.

I. Isaac and Rebekah were good, religious people. Of this we have abundant evidence in Holy Scripture. And, indeed, our Prayer Book singles them out as examples of marital virtue; for in the Collect in the Office for Holy Matrimony we are reminded that Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together; and therefore in this are examples to all married persons.

They had their virtues, but alas ! also their serious faults. Their virtues were, first, that they were deeply religious people; then, that in a polygamous age they preserved entire fidelity to one another. They were patterns of domestic purity and marital fidelity in a time when such things were almost unknown. But alas ! their faults, their grievous faults, belonged to their domestic life, and

were manifested in the way in which they brought up their children.

We read of their romantic wedding, of the birth of the twins Esau and Jacob, and of GOD's prophecy or revelation at their birth, "The elder shall serve the younger."¹

The boys grew up, unlike in temperament, in pursuits, in religion; Esau, generous and open-handed, the very opposite to Jacob, who is covetous and deceitful. Esau becomes a hunter, Jacob a shepherd. Jacob is deeply religious, notwithstanding his besetting sins. Esau is absolutely irreligious and godless, in spite of his attractive natural virtues. And he so far despises his birthright, with the religious privileges attached to it, that he sells it to Jacob for a mess of pottage, and confirms the sale with a solemn oath.²

But what sort of home influence had they, what kind of bringing up as children? Their home life was spoiled by two evils—want of confidence between their parents, and the grossest favouritism towards themselves. Esau was his father's favourite, and for the most unworthy reason, "because he did eat of his venison":³ but Jacob was his mother's favourite. And probably throughout their lives these two sins on the part of their parents destroyed the respect which should have been the basis of filial love, and brought about a relation between the brothers which was the very reverse of fraternal.

They grew up thoroughly uncongenial, Esau despising Jacob, perhaps, for being tied to his mother's apron-string, and Jacob disapproving of Esau on account of his irreligious life. Very likely the brothers were constantly trying to over-reach one another, and their parents seem to have helped them. Thus they grew up to manhood.

¹ Gen. xxv. 23.

² Gen. xxv. 33.

³ Gen. xxv. 28.

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The years pass, and their father becomes old and blind; and, thinking his end approaching, determines to bestow on Esau, his favourite son, the theocratic blessing which conveyed to him the birthright in GOD's promises. In doing this, he was apparently deliberately attempting to frustrate GOD's purpose, and to bring to naught the prophecy at their birth that the elder should serve the younger.

He evidently reckoned on Rebekah's opposition, and the mission on which he sent Esau to procure venison seems very likely to have been an attempt to secure the opportunity of solemnly bestowing his patriarchal blessing without Rebekah's knowledge. Had it not been so, he would have given the blessing publicly, with all his family around him, as Jacob afterwards did.

Here we have the first scene in the drama, the father's plot to deceive his wife and surreptitiously to secure to his favourite son the birthright blessing which GOD had promised to Jacob, and which Esau had both sold to Jacob and conveyed to him by an oath. The end that he had in view was thoroughly bad; for it was nothing less than to frustrate GOD's purpose and to bring to naught GOD's promise. The excuse was his exceeding love for his favourite child.

Rebekah overhears the plot, is greatly alarmed at it, but with ready wit at once prepares a counterplot. Her end was a good one, to prevent Esau from obtaining the birthright which belonged to Jacob; but the means she employed were most unworthy, involving shameful deceit and unblushing falsehood.

In the next scene Rebekah tells Jacob of the impending danger, and reveals to him her plan for meeting it.

We must remember that both the sons were grown men,

and therefore rather accomplices and fellow-conspirators than mere tools of their parents. Both probably knew that they were doing wrong. Jacob's courage fails him; he fears his father will detect the deceit, and that it will bring upon him a curse rather than a blessing. But Rebekah stimulates his wavering courage, saying, in the words of my text, "Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice." Probably she meant by this that she was so sure of success, that there would be no curse; but in any case, that she would take the responsibility for the sin to which she was inciting him.

The third scene shows us the anxious and ambitious mother clothing her favourite son in his brother's raiment, disguising him with the skins of the kids, and sending him forth to deceive his old, blind father, and to obtain the solemn, religious blessing, through means most dastardly and sinful.

In the next act we see the blind patriarch aroused by Jacob, and asking, "Who art thou, my son?" Jacob promptly lies, saying to his father, "I am Esau thy firstborn; I have done according as thou badest me: arise, I pray thee, sit and eat of my venison, that thy soul may bless me." Isaac, apparently suspecting some deceit, objects, "How is it that thou hast found it so quickly?" Jacob lies again, and in words that seem like blasphemy replies, "Because the Lord thy GOD brought it to me." He, indeed, takes GOD's name not only in vain, but to bolster up a lie. Still suspecting treachery, Isaac says, "Come near, I pray thee, that I may feel thee, my son, whether thou be my very son Esau or not." He smells the raiment and feels the hairy skin; but asks yet once again, "Art thou my very son Esau?" For the third time Jacob lies, and affirms, "I am."

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II. The plot is successful, the blessing is procured; but at what a cost! The grief of Isaac, the hatred of Esau, the misery of the two plotters; Jacob fleeing for his life into exile, and his mother left alone *without* the child she loved so fondly, left alone *with* the husband she had deceived, and the son she had wronged. The curse rested, indeed, upon her, the curse which she had so willingly assumed. She never saw Jacob again; she lived years of loneliness and misery, wondering perhaps what had befallen her favourite son; occasionally receiving a message from him, perhaps. And this was her reward!

And Jacob's punishment was twenty years of exile, to be deceived again and again by Laban his uncle, then by his own children; for his domestic life was one of bitter sorrow—dissension among his sons, between his wives, the disgrace of his daughter. And besides all this, a life-long struggle with the faults which had been developed at home, covetousness and unscrupulosity. It was only in his old age, when he found Joseph, that he obtained rest. His mother had offered to bear the responsibility for the sin, and the curse had descended upon her. But it did not save her son.

We cannot take upon ourselves the responsibility of other people's sins, even though we be the tempter. Jacob had to suffer as well as his mother for his sin. The home was broken up, its happiness was gone; and all may be traced to the want of confidence between the parents, and the spirit of favouritism they manifested towards their children.

The story of Jacob and Esau is a wonderful drama, true to life in every age of the world. It sets forth the growth and development in character of two children under the influence of unhealthy home surroundings. Both children

were endowed with strong personality and great gifts, and in different environment might have grown up to have been great and happy men.

They became great through their force of character, and impressed themselves upon all with whom they came in contact, but neither of them was happy. One spent his life in struggling to overcome the faults which had been developed in youth. The other spent his life in indulging them. The former, by the help of religion, displayed the heroism of suffering; the latter, rejecting religion, became a great example of worldliness. Both might have been different had their parents brought them up wisely; for both could probably trace their misfortunes to the sins of their parents, want of confidence between husband and wife leading to deceit, and favouritism towards their children leading to injustice.

III. And yet how common this is. The greatness of the actors imparts a fascinating interest to this drama; but otherwise it is what is going on around us all the time. Want of confidence between husband and wife, sad to say, is no unusual thing in married life, and favouritism on the part of a parent is common enough.

And then, too, the plotting and counter-plotting we see in the world every day—the ambitious mother scheming for her child's future, training that child in the school of worldly policy, rather than of Christian precept, suggesting unworthy means for the attainment of worldly success. And if the child's conscience protests, answering like Rebekah, "Upon me be thy curse, . . . only obey my voice," which translated into the phraseology of everyday life would be, "I will take the responsibility, only do as I tell you."

How often this is the principle upon which matrimonial

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alliances are made for both sons and daughters, marriage for position or for money rather than for qualities which are likely to make marriage happy. The mother, who after months of scheming succeeds in making a brilliant match for her daughter, is the envy of a score of other mothers who have not been so successful. But a few years later the brilliant match has ended, as such matches often do, in the divorce court, and the result is the misery alike of mother and child. A ruined life is the consequence of matrimonial ambition.

What is the best gift you can bestow upon your child? Not a fortune, not a brilliant position, but a good education. And when I say "a good education," I mean one that begins with the character, that trains a child in religion and morals, that strives to develop spiritual gifts and moral judgment, thus producing a strong and well-balanced character. This is greater than fortune, greater than position; for neither of these can give happiness, since happiness depends on character, not on the possessions—on what we *are*, not on what we *have*.

Then, education of mind, intellectual development; not a little of our future happiness depends on this; for intellectual resources are an unfailing joy throughout life. Money we may lose; but we cannot lose qualities of mind and character. As people grow old, many interests pall upon them; but intellectual pursuits only grow keener. It is no rare thing to find the scholar deeply interested in studies long after every other pursuit has lost its charm and been abandoned.

Rebekah said, in her devotion to what she thought was for her son's good, "Upon me be thy curse, my son: only obey my voice." The curse came on her and on her son as well.

☛ The Privilege of Christ's Service.

Parents should so bring up their children that they may look back upon the recollections of home and childhood, not only as the happiest but as the holiest memories of their life. Then will the children's blessings, not curses, ever return upon their parents.

Sermon XXXVIII. ✓

THE PRIVILEGE OF CHRIST'S SERVICE.

(The Second Sunday in Lent.)

S. LUKE X. 23, 24.

✓ "And He turned Him unto His disciples, and said privately, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see : for I tell you, that many prophets and kings have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them ; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them."

THESE words were probably uttered by our Lord on more than one occasion, for we find them in S. Matthew in quite a different connection.

There they refer to His teaching in parables,¹ here to the report of the great things which the seventy disciples had witnessed in their mission. We have, too, an inspired exposition of the passage in the First Epistle of S. Peter, where the Apostle writes, "Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you : Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that

¹S. Matt. xiii. 16.

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should follow. Unto whom was it revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you . . . which things the angels desire to look into." ¹

These three passages bring before us the privileges of our Christian calling. Let us consider them.

I. The revelation of Jesus Christ is the central fact of the universe. To it all else must be referred; from it all else is dated; for civilized nations throughout the world date all events from their position before or after the birth of Christ. The unbeliever rightly uses the Christian calendar, and dates his letter by the Year of Grace, for even though he does not believe in Grace or in its Author, yet he recognizes, not as a matter of faith, but as a fact of history, that the birth of Christ has changed the course of this world.

We know that this great event was prepared for in many ways by God's providence, but particularly through prophecy, and it is to this that our Lord especially refers in our text. If we compare the three passages we have just quoted, we find that they differ slightly, in that S. Matthew says that "Prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see." S. Luke has "prophets and kings," by "kings" perhaps referring specially to the Prophet King of Israel, who in so many of his psalms expressed the yearnings of the soul for Christ; while S. Peter speaks of prophets and *angels* who have searched into and desired to look into these things. These holy men earnestly gazed forward towards those mysteries of the Christian religion which are now clearly revealed to every little child in a Christian family; and not men only, but, as S. Peter tells us, even angels desire to look

¹ 1 S. Peter i. 10-12.

into them. (The word *παρακίψαι* implies stooping down to peer into an object.) And S. Paul tells us the same great truth, where he says, "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." ¹

Angels are not objects of Christ's Redemption, though they see in it a revelation of the wisdom and love of God. They had no temptation from within their nature, no tempter from without, when they made their choice between good and evil. It was deliberate; so that they are without the power of conversion from sin to righteousness. This conversion they see going on in fallen man, and they desire to understand its mysteries.

But to return to our text, and to confine ourselves to prophets and righteous men and kings, what was it that they longed for so eagerly, that they prophesied of so many times? Three things—the vision of God, the mystery of Redemption, and the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness.

1. They longed for the vision of God. Prophets tell of the day when the eyes of man shall behold the King in His beauty. They were encouraged in this desire by God Himself, as the Prophet King records: "When Thou saidst, Seek ye My face; my heart said unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek." ²

Again and again we have this desire of the soul expressed by the Psalmist, as for instance, "O God, Thou art my God; early will I seek Thee. My soul thirsteth for Thee; my flesh also longeth after Thee: in a barren and dry land where no water is"; ³ and still more definitely by the patriarch Job, "Oh that I knew where I might find Him! that I might come even to His seat!" ⁴ While the

¹ Ephes. iii. 10.

² Psalm xxvii. 8.

³ Psalm lxiii. 1, 2.

⁴ Job xxiii. 3.

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manner in which their desire is to be satisfied is indicated in the prayer, "Bow Thy heavens, O Lord, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke."¹ And this which the prophet so longed for was realized in the Incarnation. GOD bowed the heavens and came down, touched the mountains, the high places of the earth, and they smoked and burst into fire, the flames of divine charity, according as our Lord Himself said, "I am come to send fire on the earth."²

This longing for the vision of GOD was satisfied when Christ came into the world, "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."³ He was GOD. In Him was the perfection of absolute goodness, beauty and truth. His Godhead, however, was veiled by His humanity, so that while those among them who had the deepest insight into spiritual things recognized it, others did not. For example, S. Peter said to our Lord, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living GOD."⁴ And S. Thomas uttered his confession, "My Lord and my GOD."⁵

It is, however, evident that while many "wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth,"⁶ and bare witness that "Never man spake like this Man,"⁷ yet they did not recognize that He was indeed GOD. We see this in S. Philip's remark, "Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us," when Jesus answered, "Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."⁸

2. The prophets longed also for the redemption of man. They realized two things, man's capacity as measured by his aspirations, and man's misery as judged by his attain-

¹ Psalm cxliv. 5. ² S. Luke xii. 49. ³ Col. ii. 9. ⁴ S. Matt. xvi. 16.

⁵ S. John xx. 28. ⁶ S. Luke iv. 22. ⁷ S. John vii. 46. ⁸ S. John xiv. 8, 9.

ments. His aspirations were so great after GOD, after a higher life, his appreciation was so deep of what was noble, and generous, and true, and good, and beautiful, and yet his attainment was so meagre. Prophets and righteous men saw around them injustice, cruelty and degrading sin, and realized that there was no hope of deliverance for man himself; and so they predicted a day when GOD's righteous Servant should come and make atonement for sin, deliver man from his bondage. They longed for and they clearly foretold the coming of Redemption.

But what they longed for so earnestly was almost an accomplished fact when our Lord spoke these words to His disciples; the Redeemer had come, though He had not yet paid the full price of the ransom for man upon the Cross.

3. The prophets also longed for the establishment of a kingdom of righteousness, and described the characteristics of that kingdom; for this is the burden of many a chapter of Isaiah.

This kingdom Christ came to found. He chose its officers when He ordained the twelve apostles; He promulgated its laws in the Sermon on the Mount; He told of its privileges and blessings in many a discourse to His disciples. They thought that He had come to establish a mere earthly kingdom; but He warned them that His kingdom was not *of* this world, though it was *in* this world; that it was a kingdom of righteousness and of truth, and that those who followed after righteousness and truth should be citizens of that kingdom.

II. These things the disciples saw, but how little they appreciated them! These things prophets and kings had desired to see, and had not seen. Yet humble Galilæan peasants and fishermen entered into the enjoyment and

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possession of privileges which the great of every age have looked forward to and longed for.

While the living voice of the Master must have thrilled their hearts and wakened their consciences, yet we must remember that they had not, as we have, the Holy Ghost to bring home to their understandings the teachings of Christ. They loved their Master and followed Him through many hardships, but how little they apprehended Who He was and what He said.

These words which our Lord addressed to His disciples, "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see," are far more true of ourselves; for though we do not see His earthly form, or hear the accents of His living voice, we have His presence ever with us in the Church, His teachings in the books of the Holy Gospel; and we have, what the disciples had not, the Holy Ghost to bring these things home to our consciences.

What privileges are ours as Christians! what blessings, what happiness! And yet, how little, probably, we realize it. We take the teachings of Christianity as a matter of course. We have clearly taught us those mysteries of salvation which angels desired to look into, and prophets and kings and righteous men longed to see. We have God with us in the Sacraments of the Church. For us, redemption is an accomplished fact, and we have but to use the means of grace to be partakers of its benefits; and the kingdom of righteousness, the kingdom of God, is established in Christ's Church on earth, and we are citizens of that kingdom.

III. "Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see." There is yet another application of these words, which ought to rouse feelings of deep thankfulness in our hearts—their application to the privileges of the Church

which in our days and in our parish we so richly enjoy. When we look back at the condition of the Church in our country a hundred years ago, what do we see? Churches closed, services most infrequent, Sacraments neglected, celebrations of the Holy Communion at most once a month, and often only three times a year, daily services unknown except in Cathedrals.

But our fathers longed for better things, prophesied of them, worked for them, suffered for them, and we reap the harvest which they sowed—Churches always open, services daily, Sacraments within reach of all, spiritual life quickened by missions and retreats, parochial activities, giving everyone an opportunity of doing some work for GOD and the Church. But do we appreciate these things? Do we realize that privileges bring with them responsibilities; that if more is given us, more will be required of us; that if grace is more abundant, the fruits of grace in our lives must be more manifest?

We see these glorious changes; we hear the Gospel proclaimed to everyone; we know the dogmas of faith; but do we rightly value these things? Do we act upon them? Our Lord said in one of His discourses, "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."¹ Knowledge without action brings no happiness, no blessing; for it means responsibility incurred, but not fulfilled. To realize the privileges of Christianity in the sense of rising up to the fulfilment of the responsibilities which they involve, is what brings us within the sphere of Christ's blessing, and makes us partakers of that happiness which He pronounces on those who not only see and know these things, but also do them.

It will help us this Lent if we take some quiet moments

¹ S. John xiii. 17.

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to reflect upon our privileges, to examine ourselves in regard to the responsibilities they bring with them, and to thank God for having revealed to us those things which prophets and kings of old desired to see.

Sermon XXXIX.

JUDAH'S COMPROMISE.

(The Third Sunday in Lent.)

GENESIS XXXVII. 26, 27.

"And Judah said unto his brethren, What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh. And his brethren were content."

AST Sunday we studied the drama of a ruined home. The actors were Esau and Jacob, and their parents Isaac and Rebekah. In the thirty-seventh chapter of Genesis we have another picture of domestic strife. Jacob's unhealthy home life has brought forth bitter fruit in his own sons, and we see, under even more tragic circumstances, the results of favouritism in the bringing up of children.

There was one bright spot in the home of Isaac and Rebekah—their mutual fidelity to one another in a polygamous age. This is wanting in the family life of Jacob. He sinks back to the level of his surroundings. His twelve children are the offspring of no less than four wives. The children of Rachel—Joseph and Benjamin—are his favourites, and, therefore, are hated and persecuted by the others. At least this is so with Joseph, Benjamin being too young

at the time of our story to experience it, and afterwards being carefully protected by his father from the envy of his turbulent and brutal brethren.

Of the ten, four only are brought before us in the course of the history, and almost all we know of them is evil. Two, Reuben and Judah, are guilty of incest, while Simeon and Levi are types of cruelty.

If favouritism can ever be justified, it might be pleaded for Jacob that in purity of character, as well as personal attractiveness, Joseph was such a contrast to his brethren, that he could not help loving him better than his other children. Jacob's affection, however, seems to have been shown in acts of favouritism, especially in bestowing upon him more valuable clothes, for example, the coat of many colours which figures so prominently in the story. This mark of his favour had its effect in increasing the hatred of Joseph's brethren, and was used as an instrument of their vengeance.

I. Jacob and his son Joseph were alike the victims of parental favouritism; but they were unlike in this, that Jacob was the accomplice of Rebekah, while Joseph was an altogether innocent victim of his father's unwise manifestation of affection.

Joseph is the most perfect type of Christ in the Old Testament; for, while others were types in some of their actions, and at certain periods of their lives, Joseph in almost every recorded action, and throughout his whole life, was a type of our Blessed Lord. He not only pre-figured our Lord's life on earth, but His life in heaven; and not only that, but Christ's sacramental life also.

Our Lord's life of suffering is foreshadowed in Joseph's early history. He is cast into a pit, sold for twenty pieces of silver, thrown into prison on a false accusation. In

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the prison we see him standing between the butler and baker of Pharaoh, interpreting their dreams—like Christ upon the Cross between the two thieves, to one of whom Christ promises salvation, while the other dies unrepentant.

In his later life Joseph typifies Christ's life in glory; for we see him brought out of prison and exalted to the right hand of Pharaoh, to be the ruler of the kingdom; and later, by his treatment of his brethren, leading them to penitence, forgiving them, and saving their lives from the famine by feeding them with the corn of Egypt.

Throughout his whole life Joseph is a type of Christ, and he differs from all others who are types, in that we find in him no flaw. His history is given us with great fulness and detail—as a child in his father's home, as a slave in his master's house, in the prison, and as ruler of Egypt. In prosperity and adversity Joseph is always the same, whether as the innocent victim, or the triumphant ruler; his character is without blemish, his life without flaw.

He is sent by his father on an errand of kindness to his brethren at Shechem—Shechem was about sixty miles from Hebron, where Jacob was then dwelling. Not finding his brethren there, he follows them to Dothan, some twelve miles beyond, and his mission of love is made by them the opportunity for plotting treacherous murder. Like our Lord, Joseph, in obedience to his father, trusts himself to his brethren, puts himself in their power in his effort to do them a kindness; though he had reason to know their brutal character and their hatred of him.

So our Lord is sent to us, His brethren, in obedience to His Father's Will, which Will was also His own; for there is no division of Will in the Holy Trinity. He comes on Christmas Day on a mission of love and kindness, as the

lesson for that Festival reminds us—"after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared."¹ He comes, knowing what is in man, knowing man's sin. He comes as the innocent Victim to live a life of perfect obedience, to die for His brethren, to die at their hands, that by His death He may save their lives and take them into the kingdom of which He is the Sovereign, and feed them with the corn of that kingdom, with the Bread of Life, His own most precious Body and Blood!

II. Joseph's brothers see him in the distance, recognizing him, perhaps, by the fatal gift of his father, the coat of many colours, and at once conspire against him to slay him and to deceive their aged father. Hatred is their chief motive, but there is also the desire to frustrate God's purposes, revealed through Joseph's dreams. They say, "Come . . . let us slay him . . . and we shall see what will become of his dreams." They thought, in their folly, that they would make God's promise of none effect, that they would entirely bring to naught God's purpose; whereas God so overruled their action, that it was the very means by which His purpose was fulfilled, and Joseph was exalted to be the ruler of Egypt.

In carrying out their conspiracy, we notice two episodes: Reuben's stratagem to save Joseph, and Judah's compromise in order to make a profit by his sufferings.

Reuben is the only one who appears to have any conscience or natural affection. As the eldest, he was the most responsible, and he seems at first to have delivered Joseph from the hands of his brethren when they were about to kill him. Instead, however, of asserting his right to authority as the eldest, and insisting on the righteousness of his action, he proposes a cruel alternative, "Shed

¹ Titus iii. 4.

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no blood, but cast him into this pit that is in the wilderness, and lay no hand upon him." As far as the brethren were concerned, it was but the substitution of a more cruel death by starvation for the quicker fate which they had proposed; but we know that Reuben made the proposition with the purpose of delivering Joseph out of their hands.

Reuben has his good points; but he is revealed to us as a weak and unstable character; and we observe in this very stratagem great timidity in its conception, and weakness and delay in its execution. After casting Joseph into the empty cistern or pit, his brothers sat down to eat bread; but Reuben was not with them, as we learn later. What was he doing? We are not told. But very possibly he absented himself with the intention of delivering his brother; and we can imagine him hesitating and vacillating as to whether he should take him out of the pit whilst they were having their dinner, or wait a little while. True to his weakness, he hesitates and delays action; and when he comes to the pit, it is too late—Joseph is gone.

The other episode is Judah's proposition, expressed to his brethren in these words, "What profit is it if we slay our brother, and conceal his blood? Come, and let us sell him to the Ishmeelites, and let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh."

For cold-blooded cruelty and canting hypocrisy, Judah's proposition has probably never been surpassed. What, precisely, does he propose?—Not to murder him. Why?—Not because it is wrong; but because it is profitless; instead of murdering him, to sell him; because it is more advantageous.

Judah is indeed a prototype of Judas, in character as well as in name. Judas sold his Lord and Master for thirty pieces of silver; Judah, his brother for twenty pieces.

But observe not only the calculating, cold-blooded cruelty—to make a profit on his brother; but the canting hypocrisy with which he tries to salve his conscience, “Let not our hand be upon him; for he is our brother and our flesh.” He makes out that they are really doing a kind and merciful act in selling their brother, recognizing to the full their obligations of kindred. He says, “He is our brother, our flesh; don’t let us murder him; let us sell him as a slave!”

And then they send the coat of many colours, which they had dipped in blood, to their father Jacob; send it by a messenger, probably by a slave. Perhaps they feared lest, by their faces, they should betray their guilt if they took it themselves.

The climax of hypocritical brutality is reached when the criminals become their father’s comforters; for when Jacob heard the evil news he “rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his loins, and mourned for his son many days. And all his sons and all his daughters rose up to comfort him.” What must have been the feelings of those guilty criminals, as they offered themselves to console the broken-hearted old man!

III. Here let us turn from the tragedy, as brought before us in the Book of Genesis, to its application in our own day and amongst ourselves. It has two lessons for us, one social, the other individual.

1. In relation to our fellow-men, are there not some who, though they would not on any account commit murder, because murder is not only profitless but dangerous, yet do not hesitate to exploit men’s lives for their own advantage? What do we find in the sweat-shops and factories, and wretched tenement houses, the horrors of which we read of in the newspapers? Do we not find pre-

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cisely the spirit of Judah? "Let us not slay our brother; for what profit is there in his blood? Let us sell him into slavery, and live on the blood-money, the profits of the sweat-shops, the rents of the insanitary, immoral, tenement houses."

We may be thankful that in our own and other countries the Government has stepped in to interfere with Judah's profits, and factory inspectors and building inspectors have put a stop to much of this trade in human life—to much, but not to all; for sweat-shops still exist; the spirit of Judah is not dead. Let us do our best as individuals to make such traffic impossible, by refusing to purchase the products of sweat-shop work, even though we have to pay more to enable employers of labour to give an honest and living wage to their workers.

2. While this social application of the story of Judah is probably not directly applicable to any of us here to-day, let us try to realize that there is an individual application which should come home to every one of us—its application to us in relation to our Lord.

Lent is a time when we are called to realize the malice of sin, and to repent. When we sin, do we not act to our great Elder Brother, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, as Judah did to Joseph? When we put worldly profit, or social advantage, or selfish pleasure, before Christian principle or precept, are we not selling Christ? and for such a wretched sum! Thirty pieces of silver represents a few moments' gratification, on our part, of pride, or of sensuality, or of covetousness.

If we are to realize the malice of sin, we must regard sin, not so much in its effect upon ourselves, as in its relation to our Lord. In its effect upon ourselves, sin destroys everything that is beautiful and noble in us. It clouds our

intellect, it blunts our affections, it brings disease to our bodies. It has terrible consequences in this world; and in the world to come, unrepented sin will involve the loss of heaven, the punishments of hell. All these are revelations of the malice of sin as manifested in its effects upon ourselves. But if we are really to repent of our sins, we must look up; we must raise our eyes from the wounds which sin has inflicted upon us, to those wounds which it has inflicted upon our Lord. Which *it* has inflicted? Which *we* have inflicted. For when our will consented to the sin, like Judas we sold our Master, our Brother, our Lord!

Later on we find that Joseph was able to bring his brothers to penitence; for in the moment of their distress we read that, "They said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."¹

We must say this in our penitence this Lent, "We are verily guilty concerning our Brother, in that we saw the anguish of His soul, when He besought us from the pulpit of the Cross, through the voice of conscience, through the words of the preacher, besought us to repent, to break off from sin—and we would not hear Him."

If our repentance is to be true, it must come from a realization of what our sin has cost our Saviour; it must come from a love of God; from a love of Him Who died for us, and Who, like Joseph, is ready to forgive us our sins if we confess them; Who is ready to take us back to His loving favour, ready to feed us with His Body and Blood, ready to save our lives from the death of the world and of sin, ready to receive us into the kingdom of heaven!

¹ Gen. xlii. 21.

Sermon XL.

THE GLORIES OF CHRIST'S SERVICE.

(The Third Sunday in Lent.)

S. MARK IX. 2.

“And after six days Jesus taketh with Him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and He was transfigured before them.”



WE have considered the cost and the privilege involved in the service of Christ. Let us to-day turn our thought to some of its glories as manifested in our Lord's Transfiguration.

I. The transfiguration is found in all three Synoptics with great fulness of detail. It was witnessed by S. Peter, S. James and S. John. S. James was the first of the Apostles to die a martyr's death. The other two witnesses allude to this event in their writings, S. John in the introduction to his Gospel, where he says, “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father),”¹ and S. Peter, who writes, “We . . . were eyewitnesses of His majesty. For He received from GOD the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount.”²

We are not told the name of the mountain on which the Transfiguration took place. All we know is that it was a “high mountain.” From the fourth century there was a

¹ S. John i. 14.

² S. Peter i. 16-19.

tradition, which may be traced to S. Cyril of Jerusalem and S. Jerome, that it was Mount Tabor, which rises some eighteen hundred feet in height on the north-east of the plain of Esdraelon. There are, however, grave difficulties which seem fatal to this location. In our Lord's time the summit of Tabor was covered by a town and fortress, and there was, therefore, no place of retirement where He could have withdrawn, so as to be alone with His disciples. And yet all three of the narratives imply this, S. Matthew and S. Mark distinctly stating that He took His disciples *apart* by themselves.

The other difficulty is of a geographical character: that Christ seems to have been still in the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, and Tabor was about three days' journey from it. Modern students of the problem are almost unanimous in thinking that it was on one of the spurs of Hermon that the event occurred. Hermon is in the vicinity of Cæsarea, and is indeed a high mountain.

The position of the Transfiguration in our Lord's ministry is most clearly marked. It was six days after our Lord's first revelation to the Apostles of the mystery of His Passion, recorded alike by all the Synoptists.

S. Luke tells us it was eight days after; but there may be no real discrepancy here. Some have thought that S. Luke is using the Jewish mode of reckoning, which would include the day on which both events took place; while S. Matthew and S. Mark are speaking of the days which actually intervened, that is, six days, exclusive of the day on which He announced His Passion, and of the day on which the Transfiguration occurred.

A more beautiful explanation is that which supposes that it was on the sixth day that our Lord took His disciples apart into the mountain to pray, that they spent the seventh

day in prayer and devotional exercises; and that it was after this preparation that, as S. Luke says, on the eighth day, the Transfiguration itself actually took place. If this be so, the six days of labour represent our life on earth, the seventh our rest in the grave, and the eighth the day of resurrection, when we shall see the glories of the kingdom of heaven, and be partakers of that glory for ever. But here on earth we must endure the six days' toil before the mountain top is reached.

The time was probably night. We find three hints which suggest this: that our Lord went up with His disciples into a mountain to pray; and we know that on other occasions it was night-time when He did this. S. Luke tells us that the disciples were "heavy with sleep," which also points to night-time; for after a hard day's work they would be, doubtless, tired and sleepy. Again, S. Luke tells us, "that on the next day, when they were come down from the hill, much people met Him." This last mark of time seems conclusive; for, unless our Lord had used the night in descending the mountain, which is not likely, it could not be said of Him that on the next day the people met Him.

II. The Transfiguration was preceded by two great events, with which it seems necessarily to be associated: S. Peter's confession of Christ's Divinity, and our Lord's announcement of His Passion.

To the question, "Whom say ye that I am?" Simon Peter answered and said, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This marked a great stage in the spiritual development of S. Peter, and perhaps of S. James and S. John; though it seems probable that there were others of the twelve whose spiritual apprehension did not enable them to recognize their Master as divine; for even on the

last night of His life we find that, when our Lord said, "I go and prepare a place for you . . . And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto Him, Lord, we know not whither Thou goest; and how can we know the way?"¹ And on the same occasion, that "Philip saith unto Him, Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known Me, Philip? he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."²

Very likely, it was because only S. Peter and S. James and S. John were prepared for the Transfiguration by spiritual apprehension, that they alone were taken apart to be its witnesses.

No sooner had S. Peter confessed our Lord's Divinity and received Christ's approval, "Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father Which is in heaven," than Jesus "began to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day."³

At the revelation of the Passion, S. Peter stumbled, and began to rebuke Christ, saying, "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." And Jesus turned and said unto Peter, "Get thee behind Me, Satan." Then Christ goes on to show that, not only must He suffer, but that all those who will be His disciples must deny themselves, and take up their cross, and follow Him. And it is after this confession of His Godhead and revelation of His Passion, that the Divine Master takes His disciples up into the mountain to be witnesses of His Transfiguration. They must learn to believe in His Divinity before they can

¹S. John xiv. 2-5.

²S. John xiv. 8, 9.

³S. Matt. xvi. 21.

see its glory, and they must realize that there is no way to that glory but by suffering. Not until these two lessons have been grasped are they ready to behold that momentary glimpse of the divine glory which encouraged them in all the darkness of their life of sorrow, and which strengthened them to meet the difficulties and opposition which awaited them in their work for Christ.

The Transfiguration of our Blessed Lord was no mere subjective impression produced upon the minds of the three disciples, as by a dream. It was a real objective fact, a change which took place in our Lord Himself; for S. Luke, as though to meet this objection, tells us that, though they had been heavy with sleep, yet it was when they were awake that they saw His glory; and the word used for "awake" ¹ (*διαγρηγορήσαντες*) is a very emphatic word, signifying, either that they remained awake, or that they were very watchful.

III. The Transfiguration, then, was the essential glory of the Son of God, allowed for a brief space of time to shine through His humanity, through the form of a servant which He wore. It has been said that this was not so much a miracle as the temporary cessation of an habitual miracle; for the veiling of His glory was the real marvel, the divine restraint which prohibited, at His will, the illumination of His Sacred Humanity.

We have already called attention to the terms in which two of the eyewitnesses afterwards described it: S. John saying, "We beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father," and S. Peter, "We . . . were eyewitnesses of His Majesty . . . when we were with Him in the holy mount."

"His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was

¹ S. Luke ix. 32.

white as the light." ¹ So S. John in his Revelation records that "His countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength." ²

We shall remember two other instances in Holy Scripture, though, of course, not comparable to this, in which a man's face shone—Moses and S. Stephen. When Moses returned from being forty days with God in the mountain, the skin of his face shone, so that the Israelites were afraid to come nigh him. ³ And we read that when S. Stephen was hailed before the Sanhedrim, on trial for his life, just before he made his great speech, "All that sat in the council, looking stedfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." ⁴

What a wonderful thing a human face is! It is the index of character, the revelation of a soul, the dial plate on which is recorded, in the lines of self-discipline, or the marks of self-indulgence, the history of a life. How often we can read the character as we study the face of a man! S. Stephen was full of the Holy Ghost, and his face was as the face of an angel. Our Lord was the Son of God, and He allowed the effulgence of divine glory for a brief moment to shine through His human face. S. Luke tells us that "as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered." ⁵ It was during prayer that He was transfigured. Thus He manifests His humanity by prayer, His Divinity by transfiguration.

It is in prayer and meditation and communion with Christ that our souls are taken into the divine glory, and our lives are transfigured. It is at such times that we obtain passing glimpses of God's glory, glimpses which flood our souls with light and with the ecstasy of love.

¹ S. Matt. xvii. 2.

² Rev. i. 16.

³ Cf. Ex. xxxiv. 30.

⁴ Acts vi. 15.

⁵ S. Luke ix. 29.

The Glories of Christ's Service. 50

IV. S. Peter said, "It is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles . . . not knowing what he said."¹ Three *abiding* places—His wish was the common mistake of the natural heart, that it is good to bask in the light of GOD's very presence, to behold the vision of His glory, to dwell always on the joyous side of Christianity.

But it is not good for us here; for that would be to make a heaven upon earth, and on earth there is work to be done for Christ, suffering to be endured for Him, a world to be won to Him. Those who love Him will therefore choose, rather, this work, with all its difficulty and sorrow, than to sit at His feet, gazing upon the brightness of His presence, and hearing the sweetness of His words.

Raphael, in his great picture of the Transfiguration, which was left unfinished at his death, and was carried in the procession at his funeral, with true inspiration teaches this lesson. Many of you, probably, have seen the picture in the Vatican. There is our Lord, with Moses and Elias and the three disciples, on the mountain top, and at the foot of the mountain the rest of the disciples, vainly endeavouring to cast the evil spirit out of a lunatic boy.

What a contrast! the highest harmony of heaven, and the harshest discords of earth; the communion of the saints above, and the struggle with sinners below!

It is good for us sometimes to obtain a glimpse of that glory, that with its power we may come back to the dark world, bringing with us some rays of the brightness which we acquired in prayer and meditation with GOD, some rays of brightness to lighten the dark places of the earth, the clouded, sorrowful hearts of men; but it would not be good for us to make tabernacles, that we might abide in the brightness and escape the struggles of earth.

¹ S. Mark ix. 5.

☞ Joseph, the Saviour of Life.

One more lesson : " As they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of Man be risen again from the dead." The closest intercommunions of the soul with God, the sweet and solemn revelations of our Lord to us in times of special spiritual joy, are too sacred to be told to anyone; they should be stored up in our hearts, that the remembrance of them may cheer us in times of despondency and desolation; they should be treasured as pledges and foretastes of that glory which belongs to the service of Christ.

Sermon XLI.

JOSEPH, THE SAVIOUR OF LIFE. ✓

(Mid-Lent Sunday.)

GENESIS XLII. 1, 2.

✓ " Now when Jacob saw that there was corn in Egypt, Jacob said unto his sons, Why do ye look one upon another? And he said, Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence, that we may live, and not die."

IN the first lesson of last Sunday Joseph was brought before us as a type of our Lord in His Passion. To-day he appears as prefiguring Christ's work for His people in His life of glory.

After having been sold by his brethren, cast into prison, and then raised to the right hand of Pharaoh, the great work of Joseph's life began, that for which all else had been but a preparation, the work of saving life, of forgiving sin, of dispensing food to a famine-stricken people.

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And this, surely, brings before us our Lord's work at the right hand of His Father in heaven.

I. The condition of the world at all times, as regards the food of the *soul*, is typified by its condition with respect to the food of the *body* in Joseph's day. The chapter of Genesis from which my text is taken opens with the question of Jacob to his sons, "Why do ye look one upon another?" He means, "It is evident that famine stares us in the face, that we can sustain our lives for but a short time longer if we depend only upon the food which Canaan produces. It is, therefore, of no use simply to look at one another and do nothing. The realization of the peril which threatens us must stimulate us to action! But what can we do?" "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt: get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die."

How wonderfully this brings before us the condition of the world in which we live! We are created with appetites which the world cannot satisfy, and sooner or later we find this out. At different periods of our life we try, perhaps, to satisfy the restless craving of our soul by various means, all of which fail in the end to give the satisfaction which they promise.

The young man tries excitement, pleasure, sin; scales the ladder of ambition, or throws himself into the struggle to make money; and so long as he is not successful he continues to think that when victory crowns his toils he will be satisfied, he will be happy; but when he has reached his goal, won his prize, attained the success on which he had set his heart, he finds this is powerless to assuage the hunger of the soul. The craving is still there; the appetite is only whetted by the disappointment which has followed success.

This experience is so universal that it has led to the world's maxim, that happiness consists in the *pursuit*, not in the *attainment*, of the thing aimed at. But while the world's philosophy, the philosophy of despair, may serve for an excuse, it does not satisfy the heart, and sooner or later we find out that there is an appetite of the soul, which, while it may be temporarily assauged by the husks which the swine do eat—sensual pleasure, money-getting, or what not?—*will* make itself felt again and again, clamouring for its own proper food, and this food we learn that the world cannot supply.

But Joseph reminds his sons of the report which has reached his ears, "Behold, I have heard that there is corn in Egypt." "If we do nothing we shall starve! It is a question of life or death! Therefore, go to Egypt, make the experiment, find out if the report be true."

So, too, most people at one time or another come in contact with the Church and its teachings. They *hear* that even in Egypt, in the darkness of this world, there is corn to be had, food for the soul; that there is One Who dispenses it to a famishing people, the true Joseph—our Lord Jesus Christ. They hear of Christians who profess to have found in Christ the satisfaction of all their desires. They read, perhaps, of saints whose life on earth was a foretaste of the life of heaven, a life of peace, and joy, and happiness, in Christ.

Some say, "But can the report be true? Is it not a beautiful ideal, beyond the possibility of realization, a utopian dream, which has no true relation to practical life; an abundant feast of which a man dreams, and when he attempts to eat thereof he wakes to bitter disappointment?"

Others, through prejudice or unbelief, refuse to make the experiment, and prefer the philosophy of despair, the

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theory that the hunger of the soul is unquenchable; and rather than make the venture of faith which promises them all that their soul desires, yield to despair.

But still there are many, who, driven by the famine of the world, do come to our Lord, and find in Him the satisfaction of all their needs.

But the realization of these facts—that this is a famine-stricken world, in which the soul, if left without God, must starve, and that there is corn in Egypt, the bread of life, dispensed by our Lord Jesus Christ in His Church—involves two consequences, a journey,—and a moral preparation for the reception of the bread of life.

II. It involves a journey. Jacob said to his sons, “Get you down thither, and buy for us from thence; that we may live, and not die.”

We must *come* to the place where our Lord dispenses bread to His famishing people. And to *come* implies an act of the will. We cannot be brought there or driven there against our will. We must come, realizing our need, and that the world cannot supply that need, and more—believing in our Lord’s power and will to help us. A journey, too, involves time and trouble, and if we are to receive the blessings of the Church in their fulness, we must take pains to seek them.

We must take time and trouble to find out what they are, and how we are to obtain them. But to help us, to stimulate us, is the thought that it is a question of life or death! To remain in the world is to starve with the world; we must come to Jesus Christ if we are to have life.

III. But when we have taken the first step and have resolved to seek the bread of life, we find that something more is required of us—a moral preparation for the reception of that food.

This is brought before us in Joseph's treatment of his brethren. Looked at from without, it seems harsh, almost cruel; and yet we are told that "his bowels did yearn" towards them; and all that he did, he did for the purpose of bringing them to penitence, so that they might be able to receive and appropriate the forgiveness which he had, doubtless, long ago been ready to bestow upon them. He arranges, first, that they shall bring their brother Benjamin, retaining Simeon as a hostage until they do so. And then on their second return he causes his cup to be hidden in Benjamin's sack, that they may be arrested and brought back as culprits before him. In other words, he brings trouble upon them in order to test them.

We find in the first case, where he retains Simeon as a hostage, that "they said one to another, We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul, when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress come upon us."¹

This is the first sign of penitence. They recognize God's hand in their deserved punishment, that their sin is beginning to find them out, that they are guilty in regard to their brother; guilty, in that they turned a deaf ear to his anguish, to his entreaties.

The second time that trouble befalls them in the matter of Benjamin, their penitence is manifested still more strongly; for Judah—who had been the ringleader and the worst in the conspiracy to sell Joseph, who had made the cold-blooded suggestion that they should make a profit by selling him into slavery—Judah himself makes a proposition which is little less than heroic, that he would take Benjamin's place and endure Benjamin's punishment. He says, "Now therefore, I pray thee, let thy servant abide

¹ Gen. xlii. 21.

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instead of the lad a bondman to my Lord; and let the lad go up with his brethren. For how shall I go up to my father, and the lad be not with me? lest peradventure I see the evil that shall come on my father.”¹

It seems almost impossible to believe that this can be the same man as the Judah whose dastardly suggestion was brought before us last Sunday. What could have worked this miraculous change?—That which can and does, even now, daily, work miracles—penitence; first, sorrow for the sin, and then readiness to do penance, to bear the consequences of sin, to recognize in the troubles of life the due reward of our sins.

Why does GOD send us trouble?—Often for this very purpose, to drive us to penitence. It is no sign of cruelty on GOD’s part, but rather a mark of His love, that He sends us trouble; “For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.”²

Shortly after Elijah went to live with the widow of Zarephath her son died, and she said unto Elijah, “What have I to do with thee, O thou man of GOD? art thou come unto me *to call my sin to remembrance*, and to slay my son?”³ In times of prosperity how easily we forget our sins! But GOD does not forget them. And GOD cannot forgive sin which we forget. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”⁴

So it is a mark of kindness on GOD’s part to send us trouble which brings our sin to remembrance. GOD wished to bestow a great blessing on the woman of Zarephath, and so He sent her first a great sorrow, which brought her sin to remembrance. After it had been remembered and

¹ Gen. xliv. 33, 34.

² Heb. xii. 6.

³ 1 Kings xvii. 18.

⁴ 1 S. John i. 9.

confessed, and repented of, it was forgiven, and her son was given back to her.

So Joseph's treatment of his brethren prefigures God's treatment of us, the way in which we are brought to penitence, that our sins may be pardoned and blotted out.

IV. Judah manifests his penitence not only in words but in deeds. He is ready to take Benjamin's place, to bear his punishment, in order to spare his aged father the grief of losing Benjamin. Forgiveness immediately follows, and then food, corn—at first sufficient for immediate needs, for their journey back to Canaan; and then afterwards, the life of communion; for we read that Joseph said, "Come near to me, I pray you"; and again, "I will nourish thee; for yet there are five years of famine; lest thou . . . come to poverty."¹

At first we come to the Church, driven, perhaps, by some great need, and find help for that occasion, food which gives strength for a special trial; but afterwards we hear our Lord's gracious invitation, "Come near, I pray thee, and dwell with Me, and I will feed thee, I will nourish thee; for there are yet five years of famine in the land." Then the life of fellowship begins—the life of union is begun on earth, but it lasts for ever in heaven; not only a life of union, but a life of glory, a share in our Lord's glory.

Joseph invited his brethren to share his fortunes in Egypt; and our Lord promises us that we shall share His glory, not only here, but for ever hereafter. He promises "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne."²

¹ Gen. xlv. 4, 11.

² Rev. iii. 21.

Sermon XLII.

CHRIST, OUR LIFE.

(Mid-Lent Sunday.)

S. JOHN v. 40.

"Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life."

IN these words our Lord Jesus Christ sums up the consequences to the Jews of their rejection of Him, and indicates its cause. As the words do not stand alone, but are the conclusion of a series of arguments, we must begin by studying them in relation to their context.

In the verses which precede them Christ draws attention to the threefold witness on which He bases His claim to acceptance. While noticing (vv. 33-35) the witness of S. John the Baptist, He puts it aside, saying, "I receive not testimony from man . . . But I have greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father hath given Me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father hath sent Me." Our Lord first points to His wonderful works, His miracles, as bearing witness to what He was, to the fact that the Father had sent Him. This He claims as His first witness.

Then He goes on to say, "And the Father Himself, Which hath sent Me, hath borne witness of Me." Here, probably, He is referring to the voice of His Father at His baptism, which proclaimed, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased."¹ This is the second witness.

¹ S. Matt. iii. 17.

The third is Holy Scripture : “ Ye search the Scriptures, for in them ye think ye have eternal life : and they are they which testify of Me.” It is not certain whether the verb “ search ” is in the imperative or indicative mood ; but the latter agrees best with the context and with the argument.

The Jews rejected all these testimonies, and our Lord sums up the consequence of their rejection in the words of my text, “ Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.”

I. The great gift of God to man in Adam was the gift of life—life in all its fulness ; life of body, and mind, and soul—life in its integrity. Adam’s sin led to the loss of spiritual life, and, besides this, to the loss of immortality of the body, to the introduction of error and darkness into the intellect, and of weakness into the will.

But the craving for life still remains in human nature, and not merely for the life of the body, but for the life of every part of man’s threefold being. As regards the body, this is evidenced by the proverb that “ Self-preservation is the first law of nature.” We know what hardships men will endure to prolong for a few days the life of the body ; how they struggle to retain it ! What they will suffer to save it ! We are all familiar with thrilling stories of shipwrecked mariners enduring sufferings seemingly worse than death, in the hope of preserving life.

As regards the mind, the passion of curiosity, the craving for knowledge, bears witness to man’s desire for intellectual life. While in the soul the thirst for God, the craving to love and to be loved, is a witness that the desire for spiritual life, for communion and fellowship with God, while impeded, has not been extinguished by sin. The craving, then, of man in every part of his nature is for *life*.

II. "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." In other words, the end of revelation is eternal life—the purpose for which the scriptures were written, for which revelation was given, was to satisfy this craving of man for life.

Christ points out that the Jews recognized this, when He says, "Ye search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life." There is no issue between our Lord and His countrymen on this point. They thought that in the scriptures they had eternal life, and they thought so rightly; only they never found that revelation of eternal life which they contained, that pearl of great price for which they professed to be seeking. And why was this?—Because they stumbled at the letter, and missed the spirit.

The search in our Lord's time was indeed minute and laborious. They counted the very letters of which Holy Writ was composed. They spent their lives in studying the written law containing the Pentateuch, and in developing the various precepts into the minutest details; but the spirit which underlay the letter, which gave life to the law, they absolutely ignored. Of them it might indeed be said that "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life."¹ They studied the law, but they never found out that it was a school-master to lead them to Christ.²

The scriptures to which our Lord referred were, of course, those of the Old Testament, the only ones then in existence; and of them He says, "They are they which testify of Me." By types and sacrifices, in law and prophets, everything pointed to Christ. The Jews recognized this partially, in that they expected a Messiah Who was to fulfil the prophecies; but when the Messiah came,

¹ 2 Cor. iii. 6.

² Cf. Gal. iii. 24.

they rejected Him. They possessed the scriptures, and valued them as one might value a casket containing some precious jewel. They spent their time searching the scriptures, examining the casket with minutest scrutiny, but they never found the jewel it contained; for they never found the key to unlock that casket, since that key was Christ.

III. And how does our Lord describe their failure to understand and to accept the threefold witness to Himself—the witness of His works, the witness of His Father, and the witness of those scriptures which they believed contained eternal life, and which testified of Him?—He describes them in these words of deep sadness, “Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life.” In rejecting Him, they rejected that which they were seeking—life—eternal life.

It was life, spiritual life, which man lost at the Fall; it was life, eternal life, that man has ever craved and sought since the Fall; and it was this life that Christ came to bestow.

How many times our Lord reveals this! In the allegory of the Good Shepherd He says, “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”¹ He says again of His sheep, “I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand.”² He tells His Apostles, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.”³ In the synagogue at Capernaum He proclaimed, “Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life.”⁴ And again, “Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you.”⁵ And in my text He sadly

¹ S. John x. 10.

² x. 28.

³ xiv. 6.

⁴ vi. 54.

⁵ vi. 53.

sums up the result of rejecting Him, in the words, "Ye will not come to Me, that ye might have life."

Christ is "our life," as S. Paul tells us.¹ He is the Author of all life; for "All things were made by Him; and without Him was not anything made that was made."² He is the support of life, the bread of life; for He says, "I am the bread of life: he that cometh to Me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst."³ He is the example and pattern of life. He bade His disciples to follow Him. And S. Peter writes, "For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps."⁴

To all these things the Scriptures bear witness—we can have no life unless we come to Christ.

But our Lord not only reveals the consequences of rejecting Him, but points to its causes: "Ye *will* not come to Me"; "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you";⁵ "Ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth."⁶

Here we have indicated three causes why they would not come to Him:—

1. Lack of religious sincerity: "I know you, that ye have not the love of God in you." The religion of our Lord's time was a religion of externals, of formalism. It did not touch the life, the heart. It was not that the Jews were not interested in religion—it was the main interest of their lives; it was not that they did not give time to religion—they spent most of their time upon it. And yet our Lord says of the most religious among them, the Pharisees, that they were hypocrites; not conscious hypocrites, but self-deceived. They wore the garments of reli-

¹ Cf. Col. iii. 4.

² S. John i. 3.

³ S. John vi. 35.

⁴ 1 S. Peter ii. 21.

⁵ S. John v. 42.

⁶ ix. 41.

gion, they adopted its phraseology; but they knew nothing of its spirit; it did not affect their real character. They did not love God; they had not His word abiding in them; they did not use the helps of religion as a means to live in holy fellowship with Him.

But what was true of our Lord's time is true of our own. How many there are amongst ourselves who come under the same condemnation! Not that these are not interested in religion; not that they do not take an active part in the work of their parish; not that they are not what are called "pillars of the Church"; but that it is all external—it does not touch their heart; they do not love God, and therefore their religion is not sincere. Like the Pharisees, they are not conscious hypocrites; only they are entirely self-deceived, they make religion consist in observing the outward letter of precept, instead of making religion to be the uplifting of the soul to God.

2. Lack of spiritual discernment. This is the second cause of failure. Our Lord says to the Pharisees, "If ye were blind, ye should have no sin: but now ye say, We see; therefore your sin remaineth." They prided themselves on their spiritual discernment, upon their orthodoxy, upon the fidelity with which they kept the minutest details of the law; but they could not see beneath the letter the principles which the law was intended to teach.

It had ever been so, even in the time of the prophets; for our Blessed Lord gave this as the reason why He used parables, saying, "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and

their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.”¹

3. Lack of self-surrender. This is the last and the worst: “Ye *will not* come to Me, that ye might have life.” The fault is in the *will*, that power on which every moral action depends, that power by which man chooses good or evil. Their fault was not only in the intellect, but in the will; for our Lord told them, “If any man will do His Will (GOD’S Will), he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of GOD, or whether I speak of Myself.”²

They would not come to Christ, and why?—Because it involved too great a sacrifice. It involved self-surrender, absolute self-surrender; surrender of prejudices—the first step, and then surrender of self—the next. The convert Saul’s first question was, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”³ Few men had more prejudices than S. Paul—prejudices of race, of education, of religion; but they were all laid at Christ’s feet when he said, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?”

We cannot come to Christ unless we are ready to surrender our will to Him. But what is the reward if we do come?—Life; that we might have life—eternal life—life in every part of our nature; eternal life of body; for our Lord promises, “Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.”⁴ Thus, feeding on Christ’s body is associated with the joyful resurrection of our body at the day of His coming to judgment. Life of the mind; for Christ says, “I am . . . the Truth”;⁵ and again, “If ye continue in My

¹ S. Matt. xiii. 13-15.

² S. John vii. 17.

³ Acts ix. 6.

⁴ S. John vi. 54.

⁵ xiv. 6.

word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”¹

And then life of the soul; for “this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life.”²

How lovingly our Lord invites us! “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.”³ Come unto Me, and I will give you life.

In this world of toil and strife, in this world of sickness and death, Christ offers us rest and life. It is not only a future reward, but a present enjoyment; for, as S. Paul says, “I *live*; yet not I, but Christ *liveth* in me.”⁴

Let us, then, earnestly ask of God so to help us by His preventing grace, that we may *will* to come to Him; and that, coming to Him, we may find life.

¹ S. John viii. 31, 32. ² 1 S. John v. 11, 12. ³ S. Matt. xi. 28. ⁴ Gal. ii. 20.

Sermon XLIII.

THE BURNING BUSH. ✓

(Passion Sunday.)

EXODUS III. 2, 3.

"And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush : and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed. And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt."



VISIONS are of two kinds, objective and subjective. Some appear to the eye of sense, others to the imagination. The vision of the burning bush was, however, distinctly objective, since Moses turned aside to see it. Tradition marks a spot on the right of Mount Sinai, where the angel of the Lord is supposed to have appeared to Moses, and where now the Convent of Justinian stands.

The word translated "bush" is still the name of a thorny shrub, a species of acacia, common to the neighbourhood of Sinai; so that the bush was evidently a thorn bush.

I. This vision was the turning-point in Moses' life, and we may trace at least three steps in his preparation for it.

1. Forty years had passed since Moses, in the heat of his indignation, slew the Egyptian who was ill-treating an Israelite—forty years of exile passed in humble industry. What a change from the glitter and excitement of Pharaoh's court to the quiet and monotonous life of a shepherd in the tents of Midian! But these years had not been passed in the pride of idleness. Moses had laid aside

his high dignity as a son of Pharaoh's daughter, and had applied himself to the useful work of tending sheep; useful but humble work; for apparently he had not even come, at the end of these forty years, to possess a flock of his own; he was tending the flock of Jethro.

How often it is to workers and through work that God's revelation comes! So it was with the Magi—as they were pursuing their customary task of studying the stars, the birth of Christ was revealed to them by a star. So it was with S. Peter—he was engaged in his trade as a fisherman, when Christ called him to become a fisher of men. So it was with S. Matthew—he was attending to his business at the receipt of custom, when our Lord said, "Follow Me."

Revelations do not come to the proud, or to the idle, but to those who, according to their lights, are working and waiting with humble trust in God.

2. These forty years were spent largely in solitude, in communion with nature and with God, far from the Egyptian court with all its distracting cares. And God, through nature, through the thorn bush, reveals Himself to Moses.

There can be no doubt about the temperament of Moses, that he was choleric, impetuous, enthusiastic! It had led him, in a burst of indignation, to slay the Egyptian; it afterwards led him to strike the rock. But he had had forty years of waiting. At first, perhaps, he spent the time pondering over plans for the deliverance of his fellow-countrymen in Egypt, hoping that he might have some hand in their deliverance; but as years rolled on, and Moses approached fourscore, these hopes must have died down, so far as he was himself concerned. Probably there was always a trust in God, that in His good time He would deliver His people; but that it would happen in the lifetime

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of Moses, and that he should be the instrument, must have seemed most improbable. He had learned, however, to wait, to tame his fiery nature, and to trust in God.

3. One day he was attracted by a strange sight—a bush burned with fire, and yet was not consumed—and he said, “I will now turn aside, and see this great sight.” He had learned to work, he had learned to wait, and he had not forgotten to act promptly at the right moment. Others might have passed by the bush; he turned out of his path, he turned aside to see it.

These are the three stages we may trace in the preparation of Moses for GOD’S revelation.

II. But what was the meaning of the vision?

1. To Moses it represented the Israelites under their affliction; for the thorn bush, burned with fire, yet not consumed, signified GOD’S people under divine chastisement. Fire is the emblem of the Deity, and it is also a symbol of purification by affliction sent by GOD’S providence. The fire did not consume the bush, but glorified it. So affliction sent by GOD, if rightly borne, does not destroy but develops and glorifies not only GOD’S Church but each individual member of that Church. So that the vision itself in this sense was an encouragement to Moses.

2. But the vision was for all time and for all GOD’S people; and we find S. Cyril of Alexandria, in his controversy with Eutyches, employing it as a type of the Incarnation of the Son of GOD, and pointing out how wonderfully it illustrated one particular aspect of the Incarnation—the distinction of the two natures in Christ. Eutyches taught that the human and divine natures were fused into one; while S. Cyril insisted on the Catholic dogma which was defined at the Council of Chalcedon, that in Christ the human and divine natures were entirely distinct, though

hypostatically united in the one Person of the Son of GOD; so that Christ was perfect GOD and perfect Man.

The lowly thorn bush well represented Christ's human nature in the humble and painful circumstances of the Incarnation; while the fire—pure, subtle, and all-pervading—typified the divine nature; for the human nature is taken into the divine; yet so that it is not destroyed nor consumed by it. This was brought out in the type by the thorn bush which burned in the fire, but was not consumed.

Fire, too, affords light and heat, and typifies light and love. And S. John in his Epistle teaches us that "GOD is light, and in Him is no darkness at all";¹ and "GOD is love";² and that the Incarnation is the manifestation to this dark world of light and love; for it is the manifestation of GOD Himself in human nature.

3. But not only is the burning bush a type of the Incarnation; it is also a type of the Passion. We must remember that the one can never be separated from the other, that they are not two isolated doctrines of Christianity; but that, given the Incarnation of the Son of GOD in a sinful world, the Passion follows as the result of His work in redeeming the world from sin.

The thorn bush tells of penance—Adam's penance, when GOD, on account of Adam's sin, cursed the ground for his sake, saying, "Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee."³ Thorns, which were first the consequence of sin, are always the symbol of its penance, of that bitter toil to sustain life, which, but for sin, would have been unknown.

They are a type of the penance so lovingly borne, so fully worked out by the second Adam, when He made "a full, perfect and sufficient . . . satisfaction for the sins of

¹ 1 S. John i. 5.

² 1 S. John iv. 8.

³ Gen. iii. 18.

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the whole world " upon the Cross; for there we see our Lord wearing the crown of thorns, and fulfilling Isaiah's prophecy, " Who would set the briars and thorns against Me in battle? I would go through them, I would burn them together." ¹ In the Passion of Christ we behold the thorns burning in the fire of divine love.

But again in the Passion we see our Lord as perfect Man, like the thorn bush, with " no form nor comeliness . . . despised and rejected of men . . . wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace upon Him." ² We see Him scourged! mocked! crowned with thorns! crucified! dying! dead! and yet always God! Perfect Man; Perfect God; His humanity burning in the fires of divine love, and yet not consumed.

III. But we must not pass over the fact that the thorn bush was also a medium of a new revelation to Moses; indeed, of two revelations—of the character of God, and of the work of his own life.

1. For then God revealed Himself under the name of Jehovah, " I AM THAT I AM," the one Self-existent, absolute Being. So, too, in the Passion does God reveal Himself to us under a new aspect of wonderful pity and love, yet with a holy hatred of sin. On the Cross we see a revelation of God's mercy and truth, of God's love, and yet of His justice.

2. But this new revelation of God's character was accompanied by a revelation to Moses of the work of his own life; not only was Israel to be delivered, but he was to be God's instrument in that deliverance; he was to be their leader; this was to be the work of his life, the work for which all that preceded had been a preparation.

¹ Isaiah xxvii. 4.

² Isaiah liii. 2, 5.

This Passion-tide may have some such revelation for us; not only a revelation of GOD's pity and love for us, not only of His hatred of sin; but perhaps of some special work which He has for us to do. How often it has been at the Cross and in Passion-tide or Holy Week that men have heard the message which has revealed to them the work of their life!

If we are to use this Passion-tide rightly we must follow the example of Moses, we must turn aside to see this great sight. Let us, then, turn aside, so far as is possible, from worldly thoughts and cares to contemplate the Passion and death of the Son of GOD, the mystery by which we were redeemed.

And then, too, we must imitate the reverence of Moses. GOD said to him, "Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground." We must approach with holy fear, realizing the solemnity, the awfulness of the mystery, which we are not only commemorating at this season, but in which we have our own part to play. If we approach in this spirit, when Lent has passed we shall go on our way with a deeper sense of GOD's love for us, with a greater hatred for sin, and with a clearer grasp of the work which He has for us to do now in our life in the world.

Sermon XLIV.

PATIENCE, A CONDITION OF SALVATION.

(*Passion Sunday.*)

S. LUKE XXI. 19.

"In your patience possess ye your souls."



HERE are in this verse three leading words, each of which requires careful examination that we may grasp its true force and meaning.

I. Let us first take the word rendered "souls" (*ψυχάς*). It comes from a word which signifies "to breathe," and so means literally "the breath of life." It is used in various senses, sometimes of the mere animal life; at other times, of that higher life in which the spiritual part of man gains dominion over his lower nature. It has its relation to the mere bodily life of man in this world, and may be so dominated by the world that it scarcely rises above this. It has also a relation to the higher, spiritual life of man. So that we find in the New Testament it is used in more than one sense; as, for instance, in S. Matthew, "For whosoever will save his *life* shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his *life* for My sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own *soul*? or what shall a man give in exchange for his *soul*?"¹

In this passage the words translated in the first sentence by "life" are the same as the words translated in the second sentence by "soul"; and yet they are used in a

¹ S. Matt. xvi. 25, 26.

different sense. "Whosoever will save his life" evidently means his *earthly* life; and whosoever is ready to surrender that life for Christ's sake shall find it in a higher life. The earthly life is transient, and is only a means of acquiring the higher life, which is eternal. To be so anxious, therefore, to preserve what is transitory, is to forfeit what is eternal; to be willing to surrender the mere natural life, to mortify its lower impulses, is to enable the spirit to transform it into that higher life, which is the true end of man.

Then we must observe that the word in our text translated "possess" (κτήσασθε) must have an active, not a passive, force; so that we must render it, "to acquire possession," "to gain or to win the soul." It seems probable, too, that we should read the future rather than the aorist, so that the passage will contain a promise—"In your patience ye shall win your souls."

Finally, we must notice that the word translated "patience" (ὑπομονή) has rather the sense of endurance than of suffering. It comes from ὑπομένειν, which means literally "to tarry behind," "to abide under" (a trial).

With this preliminary examination of the force and meaning of these words, we shall be better prepared to consider the important lesson they teach us.

II. In this section of the chapter Christ is answering the question put to Him, "Master . . . when shall these things be? and what sign will there be when these things shall come to pass?" that is, the destruction of Jerusalem, and the throwing down of the temple. Our Lord first warns His disciples not to be deceived by certain events, such as wars and commotions, earthquakes and famines, fearful sights and great signs in heaven; persecution, betrayal by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolk, and

friends; martyrdom, and tribulation of all kinds. These, He says, must come first; "but the end is not by and by." He promises them power to answer their adversaries, a mouth and wisdom which they shall not be able to gainsay nor resist. He tells them that not an hair of their head shall perish; and He ends the section with the words of my text, "In your patience ye shall win your souls."

III. What may we learn from this?

1. That tribulation is part of the discipline of Christian life; that trials and temptations, sorrows and difficulties, are not to be regarded as signs of the coming of the end of the world, but as GOD's method of preparing us for heaven. They do not come to us by accident, but by GOD's providence. Our environment may seem to be decided by apparently trivial incidents, which determine the place where we live, the business or profession which we follow; and yet in all these things we ought to see GOD's providence supplying us with just the environment which is best suited to develop what is weak in us, to give us an opportunity of triumphing over difficulties, and winning our souls.

2. But how are we to meet these adverse circumstances so as to develop the faculties of our higher life, so as to win our souls? Our Lord tells us—through patience, that is, by steady endurance of these trials. There is no lesson of spiritual life more practical or more important than this—that character, and especially spiritual character, is only developed under adverse circumstances, and only developed by persevering effort, by steady endurance, until we have triumphed over our environment; in a word, that we are to win our souls by staying where GOD has put us.

The theory that by getting away from temptation, we shall progress spiritually, is very attractive, very common,

but quite false; for S. James says, "Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing."¹ And again he says, "Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life."² In this passage, "temptation" does not mean merely temptation to sin; it includes every sort of trial, everything that tests us and proves us, and develops our character.

Instead of wishing to avoid this testing, instead of trying to escape it, S. James tells us we are to count it all joy when, by God's providence, it befalls us; and our Lord in our text assures us that it is through enduring this that we shall win our souls, that we shall develop that higher life which will be our joy throughout eternity.

How many long for *favourable* spiritual environment, that they may grow in the virtues of a Christlike life! And yet those virtues can only be developed in us by meeting temptation to the opposite sin. Favourable spiritual environment almost always means spiritual enervation, just as favourable natural environment means enervation both of body and character. We see it everywhere exemplified in the history of our race. Those who live in tropical countries—where the earth, almost without man's labour, brings forth abundant supplies of food—are, we know by experience, as a race neither strong in body, mind or character. It is to the hardy mountaineers, who have to labour in the sweat of their face to wring from the reluctant earth sufficient to support life, and who live with frugality, that we look for strength of body and nobility of character.

No part of man's nature is developed, excepting by the

¹ S. James i. 2, 5.

² v. 12.

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law of struggle. The marvellous inventions of labour-saving machinery, which have almost transformed methods of work in our day, are the result of efforts to overcome difficulties, not mere intuitive discoveries.

And so in the spiritual life, it is by endurance of trial, by bearing the cross, by resisting temptation, that every spiritual faculty is developed, that every Christian virtue grows.

It was so with the saints; while they differed in many things, in rank and education, in wealth and opportunity, in age and sex, there was one feature common to them all, and that feature was that they bore, deeply stamped upon them, the marks of suffering; that they all carried the Cross of Christ. Saints were not developed under favourable environment, but under the most adverse circumstances. It was through endurance, through staying where GOD had put them, that the saint won his soul and gained his crown.

“In your patience ye shall win your souls.” Through staying where GOD has put you, and relying upon Him to send you grace to meet every trial, you are to win the higher life, which is the development of the soul, its domination by the Spirit. And there is this comforting thought, “I am here by GOD’s providence, and therefore I must stay here. GOD knows best what I need for my discipline and development, and GOD will with every trial, with every temptation, send me grace to meet it. My anxiety, therefore, must be, not to change my environment, not to get away from my cross, but to use the grace which GOD offers me, and to rise up to correspond with His wise and loving purposes for me.”

How often we pray for more grace, when we are not using the grace GOD has given us. One communion

received with right dispositions can flood the soul with such a stream of divine grace, that, if used, it would transform us into saints. But, alas! we make communion after communion; God pours His life into us again and again, and we ask for more, when we are not really using the abundant grace we have! We need to pray, not "Lord, give me more grace," but "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the *wills* of Thy faithful people; that they, plentifully bringing forth the fruit of good works, may by Thee be plentifully rewarded."

3. And what is the end which our Lord purposes?—That we should win our souls. This is the purpose of the struggle of this life, to win the soul of God and eternity. And this battle must be fought, not on ground of our own choosing—for if this were so, we should probably choose the wrong ground—but in the place where God puts us, on the ground which He chooses for us. And this battle must be fought to the end. So our Lord implies in the words, "Through your endurance ye shall win your souls." And He makes this more clear when He says, "He that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved."¹

How great is the issue of the battle—to win or lose our life, our soul, our all! And this victory cannot be obtained by a few brilliant charges, but by steady fighting, by endurance unto the end, by the exercise of holy patience, by the continual use of the means of grace, by the recognition that all the adverse circumstances of our life, so far from being hindrances, are helps, if we correspond with God's grace, and allow them to effect what God purposes in us—the development of that spiritual character which will be our joy for ever in His kingdom in heaven.

¹ S. Mark xiii. 13.

Sermon XLV.

PHARAOH.

(Palm Sunday.)

EXODUS IX. 35.

“And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened, neither would he let the children of Israel go.”



AMONG the characters of Holy Scripture Pharaoh stands out an awful example of stubborn pride, of a heart hardened under God's most manifest dealings with it.

I. But before investigating Pharaoh's character we must briefly notice a serious moral difficulty—that we find in Holy Scripture the expression, “the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart.” This has been taken by some to mean that Pharaoh was not a free agent; that, while sending judgments and trials upon him, God acted in such a manner upon Pharaoh's will, that he could not do otherwise than as he did; so that the rejection of God's demands was not really the act of Pharaoh's free will, but was caused by God's compulsion. But if this were the case, how could God punish Pharaoh for doing what he could not help doing? We have not time this morning adequately to discuss this difficulty, and must be content to draw attention only to two points.

1. Our moral sense of justice is implanted in us by God Himself. It is, therefore, impossible to conceive of God's violating that sense. When, therefore, we meet with apparent acts of injustice ascribed to God, we must decline to acquiesce in them, and must take the ground that they

are either misunderstood, or that there must be some explanation which would remove the apparent injustice.

In this case it would be contrary, both to our moral sense and to other parts of revelation, to suppose that God made certain demands upon Pharaoh, and at the same time so hardened his heart that he could not obey those demands; and yet punished him for his obduracy. Since, then, this is contrary to our conception of justice, and we know that God is just, we must seek in Holy Scripture for some explanation of the statement which has caused the difficulty.

2. In examining carefully the narrative we find that God is not said to have hardened Pharaoh's heart until after the sixth plague, when Pharaoh's heart had become hardened by his own free action. In other words, the first six plagues were *disciplinary*, and only the last four were *penal*.

Disciplinary suffering is that which has for its end the good of the sufferer. A father punishes his child in order to correct faults in the child. God sends us trials, either to bring our sins to our remembrance and to lead us to penitence, or to develop in us certain virtues which can only be acquired through suffering.

Penal suffering, on the other hand, is that which has for its chief end the good of others. If we examine the principles of justice upon which every civilized community bases its law, we shall find that they are chiefly penal. A statute is passed for the good of the community, and a penalty is added for breaking the statute. For example: An officer of a bank, or a trustee, embezzles a large sum of money, and the penalty provided by law is a long period of imprisonment. The criminal may so take his punishment that it may work a moral reformation in him. The

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punishment will then be disciplinary. But that was not the purpose which the legislature had in view in decreeing that punishment. Their purpose was purely penal, to deter people from breaking the law, not to reform them after they had become criminals.

While it is very desirable that punishment should reform criminals, we know that it very often has precisely the opposite effect—the more a man is punished by the law, the more hardened he becomes. And yet the law goes on punishing, not for the good of the individual, but for the good of others, for the good of the community, to deter others from committing similar crimes.

II. Now, surely, this is very much what we are told of God's action in the case of Pharaoh. We must first try to put out of our mind the idea, which we find *nowhere* in Holy Scripture, that God obliged Pharaoh to commit the crimes for which He punished him. If we then approach the subject with an open mind, we shall have no hesitation in saying that Pharaoh deserved punishment for his cruel treatment of the Israelites. They had been invited to settle in the land by a previous king. But Pharaoh not only enslaved them; he laid upon them unreasonable tasks, and put forth an edict that all their male children should be put to death. Has any king a right to do this?

We start, then, with Pharaoh as a criminal convicted, by every law, of injustice and cruelty towards a certain class of his subjects. God sends a message to him by Moses, commanding him to let the Israelites go. Pharaoh refuses to obey, and God sends certain judgments or plagues, which are manifest signs of His power, and evidences of the truth of the message which Moses had brought. Pharaoh, however, hardens his heart, and deliberately refuses to obey God's command.

We may trace three distinct stages in Pharaoh's obduracy. After the second plague, that of frogs, we read that "when Pharaoh saw that there was respite, he hardened his heart."¹ After the next plague, that of lice, we are told that "Pharaoh's heart was hardened."² After the fourth plague, of flies, we find that "Pharaoh hardened his heart at this time also."³ After the next plague, the murrain of beasts, we read, "And the heart of Pharaoh was hardened."⁴ And it is not until after the sixth plague, that of boils, that we are told that "the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh."⁵

In what way did GOD harden Pharaoh's heart?—Plainly, by the judgments and punishments which He inflicted on him. And in this there is no evidence that GOD treated Pharaoh otherwise than He treats all men who sin against Him.

If we take an instance in our own experience—How does GOD deal with a wilful sinner? First, in mercy He sends him messages, calling him to repentance. He sends these messages by the lips of His preachers, and through the voice of the man's own conscience. If they are neglected, GOD often—not always—sends trials and punishments, their purpose being first disciplinary, to stop the man in his course of sin, to make him recognize GOD's hand dealing with him. If those messages and judgments are continually and wilfully rejected, they have the result of destroying the moral sense in a man, or, as we should say, hardening his heart. So that we may use the words, which

¹ Exodus viii. 15.

² viii. 19.

³ viii. 32.

⁴ ix. 7. Two different Hebrew words are used for "hardened," the verb "kabad," to become heavy; and the word "chazaq," to become strong or hardened. Besides these, a third, "qashah," to make sharp or hard, is found once, vii. 3.

⁵ ix. 12.

Holy Scripture applies to Pharaoh, of God's dealings with individuals now.

If a man hardens his heart against God's calls to repentance, whether sent by preaching or by trial and punishment into his own life, the result is that his heart becomes hardened; and since God sent those trials, He may be said to have hardened the man's heart by sending them, although His purpose was to lead the sinner to penitence. And after such an one has become finally impenitent, God may still send judgments which will be entirely penal, and for the purpose of vindicating God's justice when the man's penitence is no longer possible.

After six plagues Pharaoh's heart becomes so obdurate that there is no more capacity for repentance left. This point seems to be marked by the expression, "And the Lord hardened the heart of Pharaoh."¹ After that, four more plagues follow. Their purpose is, not to move Pharaoh to repentance, but to show forth God's power, as we read, "And in very deed for this cause have I made thee to stand, for to show in thee My power; and that My name may be declared throughout all the earth."²

The effect of the next plague was to bring from Pharaoh the confession, "I have sinned this time: the Lord is righteous, and I and my people are wicked."³ The plagues did their work in producing in Pharaoh a conviction of sin, resulting in a confession of his own sinfulness, and of his recognition of God's righteousness. On these two points we have Pharaoh's own testimony.

Pharaoh, therefore, stands before us as a solemn warning of the danger of neglecting God's calls to repentance, the danger of so stifling the voice of conscience, so blunt-

¹ Exodus ix. 12.

² ix. 16.

³ ix. 27.

ing our moral sense, that we become incapable of repentance.

There is one characteristic of Pharaoh's treatment of God's demands, which is well worthy of our most careful consideration. At first, Pharaoh simply ignores God's claims. He says, "Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."¹

After plagues have produced a condition of alarm and conviction, so that he can no longer *ignore* God's demands, Pharaoh strives to make a *compromise* with God—to drive a bargain, so to speak, with the Almighty. The original message from God to Pharaoh was, "Let My people go, that they may hold a feast unto Me in the wilderness."² At first Pharaoh refuses absolutely. Then he makes the compromise; they shall sacrifice, but *in the land*.³ When this is rejected, he offers a little more; they shall go into the wilderness; only *not very far away*.⁴ Then the men shall go, but not the women and children.⁵ Finally, they shall all go; but not the flocks and herds.⁶

All these are rejected by Moses; God will not accept compromises. So at last Pharaoh says to Moses, "Get thee from me, take heed to thyself, see my face no more."⁷ He breaks with God finally, and removes that which might have brought him back again to penitence—removes God's messengers.

Pharaoh is like Herod, who heard S. John the Baptist gladly, and did many things because of him. But when S. John demanded that he should give up his darling sin, that he should break off his incestuous union with his brother Philip's wife, Herod cast S. John into prison,

¹ Exodus v. 2.

² v. 1.

³ Cf. viii. 25.

⁴ Cf. viii. 28.

⁵ Cf. x. 11.

⁶ Cf. x. 24.

⁷ x. 28.

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and finally put him to death. S. John seems to have been the only good influence in Herod's life. As long as he lived, he might possibly have brought Herod to repentance; but after Herod had removed from him S. John, we hear of no further opportunity for penitence.

Lent is drawing to a close. This is the last Sunday. What has been the result of God's dealings with us this Lent? He has sent to some of us many calls to break off from sin, to take up and perform some neglected duty. How have we received those calls? Have we tried to make a compromise with God, offering to give up a part but not the whole of our sin; intending to do some but not all of the neglected duty?

We learn from the history of Pharaoh that God will not accept compromises. We learn from him the frightful danger of the heart becoming hardened under God's plain dealings with us.

Let us examine ourselves on these points, and earnestly pray, in the words of the Litany, "From hardness of heart, and contempt of Thy Word and Commandment, Good Lord, deliver us."

✠ The Anointing at Bethany.

Sermon XLVI.

THE ANOINTING AT BETHANY. ✓

(Palm Sunday.)

S. MATTHEW XXVI. 6, 7.

“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, there came unto Him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on His head, as He sat at meat.”

THE anointing of our Blessed Lord at Bethany by Mary, the sister of Lazarus, finds a place in three of the Gospels—in S. Matthew, S. Mark and S. John. It is generally considered to have occurred on the Saturday night before Palm Sunday, and forms a preparation for our Lord's triumphal entry into Jerusalem, and the last teachings of His ministry.

I. The supper in the house of Simon the leper is one of the most exquisite scenes in the Gospel narrative, yet marred by one discordant feature, the presence and criticism of Judas Iscariot. There are present at the feast Mary and Martha, and Lazarus, and the disciples, and perhaps others. The climax of the scene is reached when Mary anoints her Lord and Master.

All the evangelists agree in pointing out that the ointment was very precious, S. Matthew and S. Mark adding that it was contained in an alabaster box or vase; while S. John tells us that this vase contained a pound of spikenard, which would be a very large quantity of so precious an ointment.

Mary brake the box, so that it could not be used again, and poured the ointment first on our Lord's head, and then

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apparently on His feet, as S. John tells us, wiping them with her hair. And the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. The quantity was so great, and the quality so precious, that its fragrance filled not only the room where they were sitting, but the whole house. And this was symbolical of the fragrance of her deed, which has filled the whole Christian world.

But there was one present whose covetous soul was quite unable to appreciate either the motive or the meaning of her action, and who started a spirit of criticism among others, saying, "Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor?" S. Matthew tells us that there were other disciples who joined in this criticism; although S. John, writing later, traces it to its author, Judas.

Good people are often led to join in criticisms which originate in envy or uncharitableness. A spiteful remark is sometimes as prolific as a piece of gossip or scandal, and is taken up by others, who, if left to themselves, would never have thought of putting any such construction upon the action criticized.

It seems that Judas suggested that to expend so large a sum in a mere act of honour to Christ was waste, that the ointment might have been sold for three hundred pence and given to the poor. And this apparently practical and philanthropic suggestion is taken up by others and repeated without much thought, but meets with the rebuke it deserved from our Lord Himself.

S. John tells us that it was not that Judas "cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein." The spirit which leads to dishonesty is, of course, covetousness; but there are many who are covetous who are restrained by various motives

☞ The Anointing at Bethany.

from actual dishonesty; and the spirit of covetousness, coupled with that of envy, leads men to grudge costly gifts to our Lord and to His Church.

Such men persuade themselves that it is the spirit of philanthropy which causes them so loudly to condemn the lavishing of treasure upon the Body of Christ; as, for instance, in costly vessels for the Altar, in rich vestments for the Holy Eucharist, in beautiful adornments for the fabric of the Church. They say, "To what purpose is this waste? This money might have been given to the poor." But, as S. John remarks of Judas, it is not because they care for the poor; for those who grudge the gifts which others make in honour of Christ's Body are the very last persons who make any sacrifice for Christ's poor. Their real motive, though perhaps not recognized even by themselves, is envy at others giving what they are not willing to give; and perhaps something of covetousness in being unwilling to part with their own money. On the other hand, those who give so generously to the adornment of Christ's Church are the very ones who are most ready also to give for the relief of His poor.

However, we are not left to draw our own inferences in regard to Mary's act and the criticism of Judas. Our Lord Himself undertakes her defence, and in it pronounces the condemnation of all those who are actuated by the spirit of Judas. Those who criticize a generosity so much above them that it stirs in them feelings of envy—unwittingly, perhaps, but not the less truly—are acting the role of Judas. They should lay to heart our Lord's emphatic statement, "She hath wrought a good work upon Me."

There can be no question about the character of our Lord's commendation; for He goes on to say that, "Wheresoever this Gospel shall be preached in the whole

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world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." And in adding, "She hath poured this ointment on My Body," He clearly indicates that His Body is a fit object of adoring love, which may be expressed by precious offerings to do it honour.

II. This scene recalls the previous anointing recorded in S. Luke, when "a woman . . . which was a sinner . . . brought an alabaster box of ointment, and stood at His (Jesus') feet behind Him weeping, and began to wash His feet with tears, and did wipe them with the hairs of her head, and kissed His feet, and anointed them with the ointment."¹ Some identify this woman with S. Mary Magdalene, and also with Mary of Bethany. There is, however, much to be said against this view. But, without endorsing it, we may well compare the two anointings.

The former was the anointing of penitence, and was the expression of great love for great sins forgiven. This latter is rather the unction of thanksgiving; the expression, indeed, of adoring love, by one whose heart was full of gratitude to our Blessed Lord, not only for sins forgiven, but for special blessings vouchsafed in the raising to life of her brother Lazarus; and, more than all, the recognition not only of what Jesus had *done*, but of what He *was* to her—her Lord, her All!

In the anointing recorded by S. Luke, the feet were washed with tears before they were anointed with ointment. And we may learn from this the important truth, that the washing of penitence must precede the unction of thanksgiving. We must wash our Lord's feet with our tears of penitence before we can anoint them with the sweet-smelling ointment of our good works; for good works are not pleasing to GOD unless they be done by those who are

¹S. Luke vii. 37, 38.

in a state of grace; that is, unless they be themselves the outcome of grace. To bring our ointment of good works before we have brought our penitence to Christ, is to waste the ointment; for it cannot be acceptable whilst we are in a state of unrepented sin. Let us wash away our sins by tears of penitence first, and then with joy we shall with the unction of good works anoint our Lord.

But what do our Lord's feet represent?—They are the lowest members of that Body whose Head is now in heaven. But the feet still remain with us, still walk this earth; (1) in the members of the Church militant; (2) in Christ's poor; (3) and in our own souls. And we have to minister to each of these in the twofold exercise of penitence and works of charity.

1. The sins of the Church are our concern; for we are members of the Church; and though we may not always be able to prevent them, we ought always to strive to repent of them. Indeed, we may do more for the Church by our tears of penitence than by all our active work. And then there are the needs of the Church, means to carry on her many missionary works both at home and abroad. The Church on earth, as the feet of Christ, demands both our tears of penitence, and sacrifices of our substance, that her work may be carried on.

2. Then there are the sins of the poor—for are we not our brother's keeper?—and their many needs; and our Lord has said, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto Me."¹

3. And yet again, there are the sins and the needs of our own souls. How great they are! We are members of Christ's Body, the lowest members, the feet; and we must wash those feet with our tears of penitence, that our Lord

¹S. Matt. xxv. 40.

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may wash them in His precious Blood. But this is not all. The work in our souls must not be only the negative work of penitence. There is much to be done in cultivating in them the Christian virtues, in developing them according to the pattern of our Lord's life, and in anointing them with the ointment of good works.

III. What did Mary bring to her Lord?—Her best—ointment of spikenard very precious, in an alabaster box. And what do we bring to Christ, of our wealth, of our time, of our influence, of our very selves?

Our Lord bore witness of Mary, "She hath done what she could."¹ What unqualified praise! the greatest praise, I suppose, that has ever been given to any human being; "She hath done what she could." It would, therefore, have been impossible for her to have done more.

Is this true of our penitence? Is it true of our work? Could our Lord say it of our almsgiving, of our life of prayer and self-sacrifice?

This Holy Week, this Easter, what are we going to bring to Christ? This Holy Week, what will our penitence cost us? On Easter, will the fragrance of our Easter offering, the fruit of our Lenten self-denial, fill the house of our soul? Will Christ, Who knows us thoroughly, be able to say of us what He said of Mary, "She hath done what she could"?

¹S. Mark xiv. 8.

Sermon XLVII.

ABRAHAM'S SACRIFICE.

(Good Friday.)

GENESIS XXII. 7, 8.

"And Isaac spake unto Abraham his father, and said, My father : and he said, Here am I, my son. And he said, Behold the fire and the wood : but where is the lamb for a burnt offering ? And Abraham said, My son, GOD will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering."



HERE are some stories in the Old Testament which, by their very strangeness, and by the moral perplexities which they suggest, especially attract our attention. We find, I believe, in every case that they are intended to teach us some very important lesson, which the very strangeness and difficulty of the narrative impresses upon us with greater force and vividness.

Among these is Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Its moral difficulties have often been explained,¹ and we shall pass over them to-day. But it contains two lessons which are specially appropriate for our consideration on Good Friday.

I. Isaac's question is, and ever has been, the question of the human heart—"Behold the fire and the wood : but where is the lamb for a burnt offering ?" Abraham's answer is the true answer for all time—"GOD will provide."

From the Fall to the Incarnation the history of religion was the story of man's attempts to solve the question of sacrifice. Man felt his need for fellowship with GOD, man

¹ Cf. "Mozley's Ruling Ideas in Early Ages," Lect. 2.

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felt his separation from GOD through sin; and the problem he strove to meet was this—In what manner could the gulf be bridged over, what sacrifice could man bring which might be worthy of GOD's acceptance? This is well expressed by the prophet Micah, "Wherewith shall I come before the Lord, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?"¹

There is but one answer, the answer of Abraham, "God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering." God must provide; for man can find no worthy gift, nothing which can avail to take away the sins of the world. The ages rolled by, and God gave His dear Son to be the burnt offering, and inspired His great forerunner S. John Baptist to recognize this, when he pointed out our Lord to His disciples, and said, "Behold the Lamb of GOD, which taketh away the sin of the world."²

The first great lesson, then, which is taught us by the sacrifice of Isaac, is that GOD alone can provide an adequate sacrifice for the sin of man; and that GOD, in those times of darkness between the Fall of man and the rising of Him Who was indeed the Sun of Righteousness, did foreshadow the means by which the Atonement should be made, in the act of Abraham on Mount Moriah, a father in his love sparing not his only son.

The value to us of this record of Abraham's trial and obedience can scarcely be over-estimated, when we consider how perfectly it set forth the manner in which man was to be redeemed. How wonderfully it pointed to the sacrifice

¹ Micah vi. 6, 7.

² S. John i. 29.

of the Cross! Mount Moriah foreshadowed Calvary; Isaac, with the wood, pointing to our Lord bearing His own Cross. Abraham's act prefigured the share which God the Father had in the sacrifice of Christ, in giving His dear Son to die for us.

To-day we learn, then, how God answered Isaac's question, and provided Himself a lamb for a burnt offering; how He manifested His love for the world, in "that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life."¹

II. But may we not also find here another lesson of deep practical import in our daily lives, the lesson to *trust* God always and in all things, whether great or small; to trust God, even against earthly hope? What was Abraham's trial?—Not only a trial of wounded affection; not only the sacrifice of what he loved best upon earth, his son Isaac; but it demanded an obedience which frustrated hope, which made God's promise apparently of none effect; made it, humanly speaking, impossible of fulfilment; for God had promised that "In Isaac shall thy seed be called."²

The inspired interpretation of Abraham's act in the Epistle to the Hebrews is that he accounted "that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure."³ Abraham's faith stopped at nothing. In offering up his son he did not doubt that God's promise would be fulfilled, though it seemed to involve the raising up of Isaac from the dead. Abraham's view seems to have been that his duty was clearly to obey, to accept things as they were, without trying to understand them; to obey, and to leave the issue to God.

¹ S. John iii. 16. ² Cf. Gen. xvii. 19, 21; xxi. 12; Rom. ix. 7, 8. ³ Heb. xi. 19.

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Are there not experiences in Christian life almost like Abraham's? They may be rare, but we meet them sometimes. When the trial God sends to a soul is so crushing—or rather, so perplexing—that it raises questions which the human reason cannot answer.

For instance, when we see one whom we love, perhaps, better than ourselves, whose life, so far as we know, has been a life of holiness and devotion to God's service; when we see such an one not only cut off in the flower of age and usefulness, but cut off by a disease which inflicts sufferings long drawn out and of intensest agony—we ask, Why is this? and can find no answer to our question, except that it is God's will, that "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."¹

Or, to take another case, we find sometimes a man who is an earnest Christian, the father of a family whom he has striven to bring up in God's laws; he has worked hard and honestly, yet all his efforts have ended in failure. Not only poverty, but practical starvation, stares him in the face; he has tried everything; he has sought assistance from his friends; but all have failed him. What can he do? How shall he meet the immediate emergency? It is not only suffering for himself he dreads, but for those he loves. Who is to provide for them?—What answer can we find?—Only the answer of Abraham in his sore distress, "God will provide."

But when earthly resources are exhausted, when earthly hopes have come to nothing, then is God's opportunity—"the Lord will provide." But what a tremendous act of faith this involves! a faith like Abraham's, who spared not his own son, who hoped against hope, counting that God was able to raise him up again from the dead.

¹ Heb. xii. 6.

"GOD will provide." This must be the motto of a Christian's life; and Good Friday, surely, is the day when we ought to learn it. In the time of man's greatest need, when every help had been tried and had failed, GOD sent His Son to die for man, GOD provided a lamb for the Sacrifice after man had learned, by the experience of ages, that no sacrifice which he could find, nothing he could offer, could take away sin and bring him back to GOD.

But if in the hour of greatest need for the human race GOD spared not His Son, that He might help and save the race, shall He not in the lesser necessities, great though they be, of individual members of His Church, also come to their aid, though not perhaps until after their faith has been tried to the uttermost, not until all human help has failed?

The lesson of Good Friday is surely this, to trust GOD always and in all things, in the hour of direst necessity, as well as in the sunshine of prosperity, in the great crises of our life, as well as in our smaller trials. To enable us to acquire this perfect trust in GOD, we should often consider that the true purpose of our life must be to fulfil GOD's Will for us, either in what we do or in what we suffer. We should reflect upon the fact that GOD's Will is the power which not only rules the world, but called it into being—a power so wonderful that, while concerned with the interests of the human race as a whole, it does not overlook the needs of the lowliest creatures; for GOD, by His providence, orders the affairs of each individual life. GOD's Will is omnipotent, and yet it can be frustrated, *so far as the individual is concerned*, by puny man's rebellion.

But GOD's Will is not only omnipotent—it is a Will of love; and as GOD manifested His love by sending His Son

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to save mankind, to live and die for us, so He will, we may be sure manifest that love towards each of us by giving us all things which are necessary to our salvation. He has promised us, and GOD is faithful, and cannot fail in His promises. . The world waited many a weary age until GOD's hour had come. And so we may have to wait, often for years, before the cross is removed, under which we are barely able to stand. But we may be quite sure that in the right moment for us GOD will put forth His hand to help us.

It is considerations like these which enable us to trust GOD, to trust Him in all things, even if we seem to have to hope against hope, to suffer without apparent prospect of relief. We must say with Job, "Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him."¹ We must still each anxious question of our heart with Abraham's words, "The Lord will provide."

¹ Job xiii. 15.

Sermon XLVIII.

JESUS, OR BARABBAS? ✓

(Good Friday.)

S. JOHN XVIII. 38-40.

“And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in Him no fault at all. But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.”

THE verdict of Pilate, “I find in Him no fault at all,” is the verdict of the world to-day. It was reached after a careful judicial examination by an entirely competent and experienced judge, a judge who certainly was not biased in favour of the Prisoner, but who had a strong desire to please His accusers, if he could have found any excuse for so doing. It was a verdict, therefore, reached in opposition both to Pilate’s interests and to Pilate’s wishes.

This verdict was confirmed by Herod, who made an independent examination of the Accused. And Pilate draws attention to this, as S. Luke records, in the following words, “Ye have brought this Man unto me, as one that perverteth the people: and, behold, I, having examined Him before you, have found no fault in this Man touching those things whereof ye accuse Him: No, nor yet Herod: for I sent you to him; and, lo, nothing worthy of death is done unto Him.”¹ It would, therefore, seem impossible to have better contemporaneous evidence of our Lord’s

¹ S. Luke xxiii. 14, 15.

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innocence than that of Pilate and Herod, both of whom examined Him, and both of whom pronounced His acquittal.

The case has, however, been re-opened in our own day, and a minute examination made, not only of the charge against our Lord, but of every act of His life, and of every recorded word which He uttered. This examination has been made by persons of the most opposite views, and the verdict of all—not only of adoring followers, but of an unbelieving world—is the same, “I find in Him no fault at all.” For even those who disbelieve in Christianity, and reject the claim that Christ is divine, with one accord pronounce that He is the one and only perfect character in human history, that “Never man spake like this Man,”¹ that in Him they have been able to find “no fault at all.”

I. After pronouncing this verdict, “I find in Him no fault at all,” Pilate goes on to say, “But ye have a custom, that I should release unto you one at the Passover: will ye therefore that I release unto you the King of the Jews? Then cried they all again, saying, Not this Man, but Barabbas. Now Barabbas was a robber.”

The world, as represented by the Jews with their priests and leaders, chose Barabbas and crucified Christ, and that in the face of the verdict of Pilate acquitting Him.

The Jews, however, had the excuse that they did not accept Pilate's verdict, that they did not believe Jesus to be without fault. The world in our own day has no such excuse; for, as we have noticed, all who have examined the life of Jesus Christ as recorded in the Gospels, with remarkable unanimity, have reached the same verdict—that there is in Him no fault at all, that He is the most perfect of men. And yet our world, which proclaims the ver-

¹S. John vii. 46.

dict of Pilate, " I find in Him no fault at all," also makes the choice which the Jews made. We will not have this Man to rule over us. We will not have Him for our King. We prefer Barabbas.

How wonderfully Plato in his Republic anticipates this ! How thoroughly he understands human nature, when he maintains that his ideal " State " would not desire a man who was absolutely just, but who, being unjust, *seemed* to be just ; and then he goes on to foretell what the man who is really just, but is thought unjust, will suffer—that he " will be scourged, racked, bound, will have his eyes burnt out ; and at last, after suffering every kind of evil, he will be impaled." ¹

The world to-day admires justice in the abstract, but in practice prefers justice tempered with the spirit of compromise. The world will not have Christ as its King, *because* there is no fault in Him, *because* He is so perfect, too perfect. It cannot endure the brilliancy of His perfect righteousness ; it does not desire to conform to the moral standard of His perfect precepts ; it is not willing to receive the revelation of His perfect truth.

The world to-day demands a Christianity watered down to its own standard of life. It asks for what it euphemistically calls " sweet reasonableness " in teaching. By this it really means truth, with an admixture of error ; righteousness with a compromise of fashionable sin and selfishness ; honesty, which leaves room for the tricks of trade ; purity, which does not shut out the divorce court. Such a Christianity the world is ready to patronize, but not the Christianity of Christ. Hence, uncompromising preaching of truth and righteousness as taught by Jesus Christ, the setting forth of an inexorable code of morals,

¹ " Plato Repub. " Lib. II., 361.

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while it will attract noble souls, will not attract, but will rather repel, the world at large.

The world to-day would prefer to avoid any definite decision on questions of doctrine and morals, would rather leave such questions unsettled. It admires systems of dogma which are vague, and codes of morals which are elastic; but if the Church *forces* it to make a choice between Christ and Barabbas, it will choose Barabbas every time.

We have seen this instanced again and again in the past quarter of a century. Priests have been harried and persecuted for teaching what the Bible teaches; for doing, in the service of the Church, what the Prayer Book commands them to do. Those clergy, on the other hand, who neglect their duty altogether, who keep their Churches closed through the week, and, when they are opened, perfunctorily perform a slovenly service, giving their flocks as little as possible of the privileges which Churchmen have a right to demand—these men are not interfered with. They are called “safe” men, because they never stir up any trouble by their earnestness in teaching the truths of the Church, or their vigour in denouncing the sins of the age. These men are not only not persecuted, but they are, in many cases, singled out for preferment, just because they are “safe” men.

II. There is one very unpleasant consequence, however, which necessarily follows the choosing of Barabbas—that Christ has to be reckoned with, not only hereafter when He comes to be the Judge, but now when He is among us and in our power. Pilate realized this when, as S. Matthew and S. Mark record, he asked of the Jews, “What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?”¹

¹ S. Matt. xxvii. 22 ; cf. S. Mark xv. 12.

It would have been very simple if the matter had ended with the choice of Barabbas; but there was Jesus left. What was to be done with Him? Pilate put the question to the mob, and they answered with entire unanimity, "Let Him be crucified." And while Pilate greatly regretted this act of injustice, he really saw no way out of it. Jesus must be gotten rid of somehow, and that seemed to be the only way. So they crucified Him; and they thought that they had settled the matter once and for all.

But they were mistaken. Three days later Jesus was walking in the streets of Jerusalem again. It was rumoured that He was not dead. The soldiers were bribed to say that they had slept, while His disciples stole away His body. But many knew the truth, not, perhaps, the common people who had shouted as they were told by their leaders, but the priests and Pilate.

Pilate had yielded to their demands and crucified an innocent man to get rid of Him; and all through his life there was not only the haunting recollection of what he had done, but probably a knowledge that Christ had risen—a dread, lest some day he should meet Him. If the tradition be true, that his wife became a Christian, he would know from her of His resurrection. Pilate and the priests had not the fear which a murderer has lest his crime be discovered, but rather the haunting dread lest at any moment they might meet their Victim face to face in the streets of Jerusalem, and find Him alive again, and beyond their power.

So with men and women in the world to-day. They not only choose Barabbas rather than have Christ to reign over them, rather than submit their lives to His law, but they have to take some steps in regard to Christ Himself. If

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they will not have Him for their Master, they must crucify Him. They do crucify Him afresh by every act of deliberate sin; yet He seems to dog their steps to meet them when they least wish to meet Him; and they have either to repent and take Him for their Lord, or to crucify Him again and again as occasions arise when strong temptation besets them.

How wonderfully the Passion of Christ lives on! The scene in Jerusalem which we are commemorating to-day is repeated in every age. Christ is crucified, not only by the act of individuals, but by the acts of communities, of the world.

We are told of the people of Gadara, that after they had seen our Lord's miracle of the healing of the demoniacs, "the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw Him, they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts."¹ They only longed to get rid of Him.

The world would be very glad if Jesus would depart; but as He does not depart, they crucify Him. And as He is crucified, those who love Him come forth and stand around Him. Some stand afar off, beating their breasts, bewailing the wickedness of the world, the persecution of the Church; and yet afraid to stand by the side of Christ. But there are a few with more love, and therefore more courage, who stand out before the world, under the very Cross, ready to be crucified with Christ.

Where are we standing this Good Friday? Where shall we take our place in regard to Christ and His Church? The place we take now in time may decide our place in eternity; for our nearness to our Lord upon the throne of His glory will depend upon our nearness to Him now as He hangs upon the Cross of Shame. Our Lord

¹ S. Matt. viii. 34.

§ The Meaning of the Observance of Easter.

Himself has said, "Whosoever shall confess Me before men, him shall the Son of Man also confess before the angels of God: But he that denieth Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God."¹

Sermon XLIX.

THE MEANING OF THE OBSERVANCE OF EASTER.

(Easter Day.)

EXODUS XII. 26, 27. ✓

"And it shall come to pass, when your children shall say unto you, What mean ye by this service? That ye shall say, It is the sacrifice of the Lord's Passover, Who passed over the houses of the children of Israel in Egypt, when He smote the Egyptians."

IN the first lesson for to-day we read of the institution of the Passover and the commandment that it should be observed as a feast of memorial for ever, and that the meaning of the observance should be explained in after generations to those who might ask, "What mean ye by this service?"

I. What was to be commemorated by the Passover? What was to be explained to those who asked this question?

1. The misery of the Egyptian bondage, and the powerlessness of the people of Israel to deliver themselves from it; this was commemorated in every Passover. To those pious Jews who read the story of the captivity in Egypt, the long years of oppression, the ever increasing and un-

¹S. Luke xii. 8, 9.

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reasonable labours, the cruelty of the taskmasters, the abject slavery into which the Nation had fallen, the loss of hope and courage—there could be no doubt in regard either to the miserable condition of their forefathers or their entire helplessness under the tyranny of Pharaoh.

2. The Passover too commemorated not only the deliverance from this misery, but the *means* by which the deliverance was accomplished—the death of the firstborn, and their own redemption through the blood of the paschal lamb.

The plagues, with the exception of the last, had fallen upon the Egyptians only. The children of Israel were saved from them. But, though this salvation was evident, the cause of it had not yet been revealed. In the case of the last plague, the death of the firstborn, the Israelites were not exempted, except in so far as they fulfilled a certain rite intended to bring home to them a most important doctrine.

This doctrine was that all men, by reason of sin, justly merited God's wrath. From one point of view we may observe that the firstborn represented the family; so that the judgment on the firstborn stood for judgment upon all, and the redemption of the firstborn represented redemption of all.

Hence, not only was the firstborn redeemed, but the entire household, by the sprinkling of the blood of the paschal lamb upon the lintel and door posts. Israelite and Egyptian alike came under the judgment of this plague. In every house the firstborn was to die. But in the house of the faithful Jew this judgment might be averted by the fulfilment of a symbolic rite which pointed to something which was to happen in the far future, and which at that time the Jews could not understand—the death of the Firstborn, God's only begotten Son, Jesus Christ. The

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means, therefore, of deliverance was atonement through the blood of the lamb.

3. Again the Agent in the deliverance of Israel was Jehovah, God Himself. He brought out His people from their bondage, He inflicted the judgment, and He revealed the means by which, in the case of the Israelites, that judgment might be averted. But we must observe that it was not averted from the Nation as a whole. Only those were to be delivered from it who were willing to be delivered, and who signified that willingness by the fulfilment of a symbolic act which pointed to the means God had devised for the redemption and deliverance of the whole world from sin. Any Israelite who had disregarded God's command and had failed to keep the Passover and to sprinkle the blood of the lamb upon the lintel and door posts of his house, would have been in precisely the same position as an Egyptian.

In the first nine plagues there was a clear distinction between the two nations. In the last plague that distinction was obliterated. There is a common humanity which binds Egyptian and Israelite in one; and if, on the night of the Lord's Passover, the Israelite did not, by a religious act, make a difference between himself and the Egyptian, the judgment upon common humanity would fall upon him.

The religious act upon which his deliverance depended was a manifestation of the obedience of faith. It thus partook of that religious faith by which Abraham was justified before God, of that religious faith by which the Christian is saved through Christ.

4. Then there was to be a fulfilment, in each Passover, of God's command, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord through-

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out your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever.”¹

You will observe that GOD commanded that the memorial should be continued for ever. How is this command fulfilled? The Christian answers as on Easter Day, in the words of S. Paul, “Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us: Therefore let us keep the feast.”²

II. In appointing this chapter to be read as the Old Testament lesson for Easter Day, our Church clearly intends to draw attention to the analogy between the event commemorated by the Jewish Passover and that shown forth by the Christian Easter. Easter, the queen of festivals, prepared for by the long fast of Lent; Easter, the one Festival of the Christian year, when the Church requires everyone to make his communion; Easter, with its decorations and joyous music, challenges attention; so that not only our children, but even those who are not members of the Church, may well ask the question, “What mean ye by this service?” And our answer must cover very much the same ground as that given by the Jew, only that each point will be fuller and wider in its application.

Let us, then, take up the four things commemorated by the Jewish Passover, and see how they are fulfilled in the Christian Easter.

1. The Passover told, first, of the deliverance from the misery of Egyptian bondage; and Easter tells of man’s deliverance from a bondage worse than that of Egypt—the bondage of sin. It reminds us of the misery of mankind under the tyranny of sin, not only in the far past before Christ came, but even now the misery of those who are still tied and bound with the chain of their sins. We

¹ Exodus xii. 14.

² 1 Cor. v. 7, 8.

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do not need only to study the conditions of the heathen world in the time of S. Paul, as described in the first chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, it is enough to visit the slums of any great city, or to read the reports of police courts, to convince us that sin has frightful power over men still, and that the misery which follows in its train was not surpassed by the misery of the Israelites in their captivity.

Not only was the Jew reminded of the misery of man under the dominion of sin, but of his helplessness, his entire inability to deliver himself. This, too, we see exemplified to-day as well as in pre-Christian times. Man left to himself, man *without* Christ, cannot break the bonds of sin, cannot free himself from its power.

2. Then the Passover commemorated the means by which the Israelites were delivered—the death of the first-born, the substituted blood of the lamb. And this is what Good Friday and Easter preaches to the Christian—the love of God, Who “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all”¹—the power of Christ’s resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, by which we are freed from the bonds of our sins, and are raised with Him.

3. Again the Jews were reminded by the Passover that the Agent of their deliverance was none other than Jehovah Himself, Who overthrew their enemies and brought them safely through the Red Sea. And we are reminded that the Agent of our sanctification is the Holy Ghost, by Whose special grace preventing us all good desires are poured into our hearts, and by Whose operation in the sacraments both actual and sanctifying grace are conveyed to our souls. It is by the operation of the Holy Spirit that we are born again in baptism, that we are cleansed in

¹ Rom. viii. 32.

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penance, that we are strengthened in confirmation. It is by His operation that the Body and Blood of Christ become present under the forms of bread and wine in the Holy Eucharist. He is the Agent of our deliverance from sin; He is the Sanctifier of all the people of God.

4. Lastly, we observe that in the feast of the Passover was fulfilled God's command, "This day shall be unto you for a memorial; and ye shall keep it a feast to the Lord throughout your generations; ye shall keep it a feast by an ordinance for ever."

As we have already said, the Passover, like other Jewish rites, has been abrogated; or, rather, has been taken up into and fulfilled in its highest sense in the Sacrifice of the Altar, whereby, according to our Lord's holy institution, we "continue a perpetual memory of that His precious death until His coming again." The Jewish Passover merely commemorated a past event. The Christian Passover, without repeating the Sacrifice of the Cross, is identical with it. In it we have the same Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, offering mediately through His representative, the priest who celebrates. We have the same Victim present under the forms of bread and wine, His Body and Blood exhibited by virtue of the consecration, as separated by death. On the Cross there was an actual immolation of the Lamb; it was a bloody sacrifice. In the Eucharist there is a mystical immolation; it is an unbloody sacrifice; for, by the operation of the Holy Ghost, the bread and wine are converted into the Body and Blood of Christ. But in this there is no bloodshed, nor pain, nor death.

The Jewish Passover gained all its meaning from the first Passover in Egypt. The Eucharist gains all its efficacy from its identity with that one "full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction, for the sins of the

whole world," which our Lord Himself offered upon the Cross.

III. But is this all? No; the Passover told only of the past; but Easter, of the past, of the present, and of the glorious future—of the past triumph of Christ our Lord and King, "the first Begotten of the dead," of the present power of His resurrection in the spiritual lives of those who died with Him in baptism, and who have been raised with Him to a new life, in whom He lives; so that they can say, "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me";¹ and of the future glory of which S. Paul writes, "When Christ, Who is our Life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory."²

Easter is the Queen of feasts; the feast of the past, of the present, of the future! The feast of life, of life from the dead, of life in eternity!

Sermon L.

LIFE FOR EVERMORE. ✓

(Easter Day.)

REVELATION I. 18.

"I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

- I. OOD Friday and Easter Day, what a contrast! From deepest darkness to brightest light; from storm and strife to calm and peace; from sorrow which has no equal, to joy which can have no peer; from death to life! For Good Friday is

¹ Gal. ii. 20.

² Col. iii. 4.

the day of death, and Easter is the festival of life. But Easter tells us not only of life, but of life from the dead; of life that has passed through the grave and gate of death; of life that has paid the penalty of human sin and passed for ever beyond its dominion. Easter tells of life for evermore; and this is expressed in the first part of our text, "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen."

Easter would be a day of joy if we were called only to the contemplation of the triumph of our Lord over death, if we were commemorating only that great event in the past when He rose again from the dead. But surely the joy is deepened for those who realize that they have been baptized into the death of our Saviour Jesus Christ; so that by continual mortifying their corrupt affections they may be buried with Him; and that even now they *have* a share in His joyful resurrection. For in the Epistle for to-day S. Paul says to us, "If ye then were raised together with Christ (that is, at your baptism), seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye died (in baptism), and your life is hid with Christ in God."¹

This too is what S. Paul means by his prayer, "That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death."²

It is not enough for us only to rejoice in the triumph of Christ; we must strive, even now, to have our share in that triumph. It is not enough for us to sing our hymn, "Jesus Christ is risen to-day," unless we can feel in our heart of hearts that we have risen also.

¹ Col. iii. 1-3.

² Phil. iii. 10.

His resurrection was final; for we know that, "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him."¹ Our resurrection is gradual. We have risen from sin by penitence; and by the grace of GOD and the co-operation of our own will, death, the death of mortal sin, has no more dominion over us; but we still have to struggle with it; it will strive to reassert its sway over our lives. And we must pray with S. Paul, that we may know the power of His resurrection; that is, that we may perceive its power in our own lives, in our own strength to resist temptation, in our own use of that grace which was won for us by the death and resurrection of Christ.

But we cannot know the power of His resurrection unless we also know "the fellowship of His sufferings." We cannot know the joys of the risen life unless we know the sorrows of Calvary. We cannot keep Easter without Good Friday. We cannot taste the fruits of the victory unless we have experienced the sweat of the battle. And so the joys of Easter will be ours, just in proportion as we have known the penitence of Lent and the sorrows of the Passion.

We must, therefore, take the words of our text on our own lips. "I am He that liveth"—O what joy! to experience not only that life which is but a succession of deaths, but that life which we live in Christ, Who is our Life, Who lives in us.

"And was dead." I was dead once in trespasses and sins; but Christ raised me from the dead; and being what I am now, through the power of His grace, the remembrance of what I was once, when I was dead in sin, only adds fuel to my love, to that love of Christ which

¹Rom. vi. 9.

constraineth me to live for Him Who died for me.

And then, "Behold, I am alive for evermore." Can I say this?—It must depend upon the grace of final perseverance; that grace which, like the grace of regeneration, no one can merit, but God gives to those who seek it diligently in prayer.

Surely, this is especially a subject for Easter prayer; for the Collect tells us to pray to God that, "as by Thy special grace preventing us Thou dost put into our minds good desires, so by Thy continual help we may bring the same to good effect."

What desire can be better than the desire to persevere? And that, like all good desires, is the work of God's preventing grace; and if we earnestly pray for it, and diligently strive after it, we shall attain to it through God's gracious mercy.

But there is one thing which we can do ourselves, and which is an immense help to final perseverance; and that is, to persevere in good habits.

There is a beautiful story told of S. Philip Neri: A young nobleman came to him and said, "Father, if I were sure I would persevere, I would live the life of a saint; but so many begin, and so few persevere, that I do not think it is worth while to make the beginning, and fail." S. Philip said to him, "If you were sure that you would persevere, what would you do?" The young man replied, "I would make a rule of life. I would say my prayers with devotion every morning and evening. I would go to Church regularly. I would make my communion once a week, and my confessions. I would study the Holy Scripture," and so on. S. Philip replied, "My son, if you will begin to do these things *and never give up any one of them*, I will promise you that you will persevere."

The great hindrance to perseverance is the beginning to give up practices which are growing irksome to us, the becoming irregular about our communions, careless about our prayers; abandoning, perhaps, the habit of meditation, or the reading of the Bible, because we do not think we get any good out of it. These are ways in which people often lose the grace of perseverance.

Make a simple rule of life for yourself—not one that is beyond your power to keep—and then keep it *always*. Do not give up practices because they are irksome. The value of spiritual exercises is often not so much to be found in themselves, as in habits which they form; and a good habit is often lost by being laid aside for awhile; and so the fruit, perhaps of many years, is destroyed.

II. “And have the keys of hell and of death.” While our Blessed Lord’s sacred Body (never for one moment separated from His divinity) rested in the grave, His Soul and Spirit were not idle in Hades. No, He opened its gates and brought out the prisoners of hope, the faithful of the old dispensation, who had been awaiting His advent; for by His death and resurrection He won the key by which He opens the kingdom of heaven to all believers. This key He used in Hades when He brought out the waiting dead—Abraham, and the patriarchs, and the prophets.

This key on the evening of Easter Day He delivered to His Church in sacramental power, when He breathed on them and said unto them, “Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.”¹ He had before promised this key when He said, first to S. Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall

¹ S. John xx. 22, 23.

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be bound in heaven : and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven ” ; ¹ and afterwards to the other disciples when He said, “ Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven : and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” ²

And this is part of our Easter joy, that death and hell have lost their power ; for there is for ever in the Church of Christ the key which will unlock the prison house of the penitent sinner—the key of absolution.

Easter follows Lent as eternity follows this world of time. Easter follows Lent as victory follows the well-fought battle. Let us this Easter thank GOD for His gifts of grace, and pray that we may so persevere, that our Easters on earth may prepare us for the eternal Easter in heaven.

Sermon LI.

THE GAINSAYING OF KORAH.

(Low Sunday.)

NUMBERS XVI. 8-10.

“ And Moses said unto Korah, Hear, I pray you, ye sons of Levi : seemeth it but a small thing unto you, that the GOD of Israel hath separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring you near to Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of the Lord, and to stand before the congregation to minister, unto them ? And He hath brought thee near to Him, and all thy brethren the sons of Levi with thee : and seek ye the priesthood also ? ”

“  HE gainsaying of Korah ” is one of the most important and instructive histories of the Old Testament, and its selection as the lesson for Low Sunday is especially appropriate, since the Gospel for Low Sunday records our Lord’s action on

¹ S. Matt. xvi. 19.

² S. Matt. xviii. 18.

Easter Day in constituting potentially the priesthood of the Christian Church by breathing upon His Apostles and saying to them, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained."¹ This, taken together with our Lord's action when, at the institution of the Holy Eucharist, He said to them, "This do in remembrance of Me,"² constitutes the potential gift to the Church of Holy Orders, which was made operative when the Holy Ghost descended at Pentecost.

This gift of priesthood, through which sacraments are administered and the Word of God preached, ought to be reckoned as one of our Lord's richest legacies to His Church; but through man's sin it has been again and again a cause of dissension among Christians, and even of schism in the Church. A careful study of the history of Korah affords not only a warning against schismatical worship, but sets forth certain principles of the Church of God which are as true to-day as they were when Korah and his fellow-conspirators rebelled against Moses and Aaron.

To treat the great question involved with anything like fulness, would require far more time than a sermon allows; but let us try to grasp the main outlines of the story and the principles which it is evidently intended to teach us.

In the first place, we must notice that the conspiracy of Korah, Dathan and Abiram had amongst its instigators two distinct parties, inspired by entirely different motives. Korah and his "two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly" were actuated by theological, or at least ecclesiastical, considerations; while the causes which moved Dathan and Abiram and their followers to join in the conspiracy seem to have been *political* envy and discontent.

¹S. John xx. 22, 23.

²S. Luke xxii. 19; cf. 1 Cor. xi. 24-26.

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We may observe, too, that their punishment differed. Korah and his company, who arrogated to themselves the right to offer incense like Nadab and Abihu, offered, perhaps, with strange fire,¹ and were consumed by fire from the Lord.² We are not distinctly told how Korah himself perished, but apparently he was consumed, with his two hundred and fifty followers, by the fire that came out from the Lord. Dathan and Abiram, on the other hand, coveted earthly precedence and rebelled against an earthly ruler, and were swallowed up by the earth. So that in each case the punishment was suited to the sin.

I. Korah was a Levite, of the family of Kohath. Dathan and Abiram were Reubenites. They were neighbours in the camp; for the Reubenites had for their place of encampment the south of the tabernacle, in the outer line;³ while the Kohathites were on the same side in the inner line.⁴

As we have said, their motive in rebelling against Moses was different. Korah, as a Levite, seems to have argued that as all God's people were holy, and, in a sense, priests,⁵ to confine the priesthood to the family of Aaron was ecclesiastical usurpation and incompatible with the fact that all the nation was a kingdom of priests. There is no good reason to suppose that Korah was insincere. He had taken a doctrine of revelation, the priesthood of the nation, and, perhaps warped by pride and envy, had so exaggerated it, that he had come to think that it was inconsistent with this doctrine to recognize the Aaronic priesthood, even though that equally rested upon God's special revelation and command to Moses, "Take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from

¹ Cf. Lev. x. 1.

² Num. xvi. 35.

³ Cf. Num. ii. 10.

⁴ Cf. Num. iii. 29.

⁵ Cf. Exodus xix. 6.

among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto Me in the priest's office." ¹

Now this is precisely the theory of most Protestant Sects to-day, that as all members of Christ's Church are priests, according to S. Peter's words, "Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ," ² the limiting of the priesthood to a certain body of men set aside by episcopal ordination, is an usurpation of rights which belong to every layman, and is inconsistent with the teaching of S. Peter. And for the past four hundred years this has been a prolific cause of dissension and schism among Christians.

The true answer to it is that both truths form part of revelation, and therefore rest upon the same authority and cannot be incompatible; that no one passage of Holy Scripture must be interpreted so as to contradict other passages; and further, that almost all truth is paradoxical; that is, all great truths may be regarded from different points of view, and so will present different aspects of the same truth, these aspects being sometimes paradoxical, but never contradictory.

We must notice, therefore, that there was an underlying basis of truth in Korah's argument, as there is in the Protestant contention of to-day. In the Church of God, whether of the old covenant or of the new, all God's people share in the priesthood. They are, as S. Peter says, "an holy priesthood," or "a royal priesthood." ³ And this was so with regard to the Jews; for God said to Moses, "Ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." ⁴ But, as we shall endeavour to show, this is in no

¹ Exodus xxviii. 1; cf. also chapter xxix.

² 1 S. Peter ii. 5.

³ 1 S. Peter ii. 5, 9.

⁴ Exodus xix. 6.

way incompatible with GOD's revelation and commandment in other parts of Holy Scripture, that a special priesthood is to be set apart to exercise the functions which belong to the *whole* body, but which do not, therefore, belong to *each* of the members of the body.

S. Paul treats this subject very fully in his Epistles. He says, in effect, that, while there is but one Body and one Spirit, the *organs* of that one Body are many,¹ and the *gifts* of that one Spirit are diverse.² In regard to the Body he points out that, since the body is not one member, but many, the foot cannot say, "Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body"; nor the ear, "Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body"; "if the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath GOD set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him."³

To confine ourselves to S. Paul's illustration, we have the Church put before us as one Body, composed of many members, certain of which are *organs* performing necessary functions for the well-being of the whole Body; but these organs do not confer life on the body—indeed, they depend absolutely on the one life of the body. At the moment after death the eye still retains all its marvellous parts unimpaired, the lens, the retina, the optic nerve; but the life has departed, and the eye is therefore useless to the body and to itself. The life of the eye is the life of the body, specialized for a particular functional purpose; and yet it would be quite untrue to say that its capacity for seeing was conferred upon it at the will or by the act of the body. But, on the other hand, the body cannot dispense with the eye; nor, if it is wanting, can all the rest

¹ Cf. Rom. xii. 4.

² Cf. 1 Cor. xii. 4.

³ 1 Cor. xii. 12-19.

of the body put together supply its place by discharging the function it was meant to discharge.

What follows by applying this argument to the doctrine of the priesthood in the Church?—Surely this, that the priesthood is an organ of the body, not having a life apart from or in place of the body, but having the life of the body, specialized for the function of priesthood. Further, that as the body does not and cannot create or produce at will its organs, and cannot replace them when they are lost; so the priesthood is not derived from below, by the will and action of other members of the body; but from above, by the Will and action of God, Who “set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.”¹

Hence, while the whole body is a royal priesthood, an holy nation, it has members through which it exercises its priestly functions; and these members are set apart, according to Christ’s example, by apostolic ordination and succession. This priesthood is not a separate class, independent of the body; nor, on the other hand, can it be produced at the will of the body. It is part of the body, as constituted by Christ Himself. And this principle is equally applicable to the Jewish and to the Christian Church; and, further, enables us to appreciate the error of Korah and of sectarians in our own times.

II. With Korah, however, other conspirators were associated—Dathan and Abiram and their adherents. They were Reubenites. They were not of the two hundred and fifty; nor, indeed, were they with them when these were gathered together against Moses the very day before the test and judgment of God. Some have supposed that they were aggrieved because their father Reuben, Jacob’s

¹ 1 Cor. xii. 18.

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eldest son, had been deprived of his birthright in favour of Judah; but, even if this be not so, discontent with the rulership of Moses, and perhaps disappointment at the long wanderings in the wilderness, and the hardships they involved, may have led them to dispute the authority of Moses and to rebel against him.

Here, then, we see ecclesiastical and secular motives bringing men together in opposition to the Church of God. History is always repeating itself. Herod and Pilate were made friends in the persecution of Jesus. At the same time we find Pilate and the priests who hated one another alike putting forward Cæsar's authority as an excuse for the condemnation of our Lord. And in our own day, in England, we find again and again the political dissenter allied with the Puritan fanatic in constant attacks upon the Church of Christ in our land.

Moses left the matter in God's hand, and God vindicated his cause by the punishment and destruction of both parties.

S. Paul tells us that "all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition";¹ while S. Jude expressly warns us against those who perished "in the gainsaying of Core."²

A careful consideration of the principles set forth in the first lesson for this morning's service, read in the light of the doctrine of Christian priesthood, would save men from similar error, and would supply us with the true answer for the Church's doctrine of the priesthood.

¹ 1 Cor. x. 11.

² S. Jude 11.

Sermon LII.

THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD.

(Low Sunday.)

I CORINTHIANS XV. 13, 14.

"If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen: And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain."

IN the attack upon the New Testament which reached its culmination, and met its defeat, a little more than a quarter of a century ago, the most radical and rationalistic school of critics was the Tübingen School led by Baur. This school admitted as undoubtedly authentic only four books of the New Testament, the Epistles to the Romans, to the Galatians, and the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians. All the rest they swept away as the product of a later age.

While Christianity is independent of the New Testament, in the sense that it existed before any book of the New Testament was written, and had spread far and wide in Asia, Africa, and Europe before the Canon of the New Testament was established by the Church; yet if, for the sake of argument, we were to conceive it necessary to deduce the doctrines of Christianity from the New Testament; and again, for the sake of argument, were to confine ourselves to the four books accepted as undoubtedly authentic by the most rationalistic school of critics; it is not a little striking that we could prove all the fundamental doctrines of the Christian Faith from these four books, and that the doctrine of the resurrection, which is the

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article of the Creed perhaps most assailed by these critics, is treated with greater fulness in one of these books than in any other part of Holy Scripture.

In the 15th chapter of the First Epistle to the Corinthians we have a treatise on the resurrection of the dead in which is discussed both the evidence for the fact of Christ's resurrection and the inferences, dogmatic and moral, which follow from it.

I. S. Paul begins by briefly setting forth the evidences for the fact of Christ's resurrection. He points out: (1) "that He was seen of Cephas," (2) "then of the twelve": (3) "After that, He was seen of above five hundred brethren at once; of whom the greater part remain unto this present, but some are fallen asleep." (4) "After that, He was seen of James"; (5) "then of all the Apostles." (6) "And last of all He was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time."

S. Paul, in enumerating these six independent witnesses to the resurrection of our Lord, does not exhaust all the evidence; for he omits the appearance of Christ to S. Mary Magdalene, to the holy women, to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, and apparently to the seven who were fishing in the Sea of Galilee. But he shows that the evidence of the fact of our Lord's resurrection rested upon the testimony of more than two hundred and fifty people who were alive at the time he wrote, and could be examined.

S. Paul then passes from the fact to certain inferences which he considers may be drawn from that fact, the first being the resurrection of the dead, that is, of others besides Christ; and the next, the importance of this dogma to Christianity. Indeed, S. Paul does not hesitate to say that Christianity stands or falls by the truth of the doctrine of

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the resurrection of the dead; for he says, "If there be no resurrection of the dead, then is Christ not risen. And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain. Yea, and we are found false witnesses of GOD; because we have testified of GOD that He raised up Christ: Whom He raised not up, if so be that the dead rise not. For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised."

Nothing can be more emphatic than S. Paul's utterances on this point. He makes both his inferences essential dogmas of Christianity. In regard to the first, he asserts that if there be no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen: and that if Christ be not risen, then there is no resurrection of the dead.

He will not admit, you see, of the resurrection of Christ apart from the resurrection of the dead. Although such a thing is conceivable, he does not allow that it is true; for he goes on to say, "Now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by Man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive."

Thus far we see that S. Paul sets before us: (1) The evidences for the fact of Christ's resurrection; (2) the inference from that fact, that in Christ all shall be made alive, all shall rise again; (3) that if this be not true, our faith is vain, and Christianity a delusion.

II. Passing over some further teaching concerning what will happen at the general resurrection, and the moral consequences which flow from it, we may observe that S. Paul meets two common objections and answers two questions, which are constantly being asked in our own time, as they have been, probably, in every age of

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Christianity. These questions are, "How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?" You see that S. Paul thus passes from the *fact* of the resurrection, which he considers true, to a question with respect to the *mode* of that resurrection, which he answers clearly indeed, but only by analogy; and then that he takes up the further question of the characteristics of the resurrection body. Let us briefly examine his teaching on each of these points.

With regard to the mode of the resurrection he refers us to the common every-day phenomenon with which all are familiar—of the growth of a grain of wheat, or any other seed—and directs our attention to certain points which by analogy suggest an answer to both these questions.

If it be asked, "How are the dead raised up?" he shows that in the case of a seed the condition of its return to life is its *death*, that is, the dissolution of its material wrappings—"That which thou thyself sowest is not quickened, except it die." It is by the process of dissolution that the germ of life, which the seed contains, is set free and asserts itself. This germ of life shows itself by two shoots in opposite directions, one beneath the ground, the root; the other, the stem, above it. But the *tissue* of which these are formed *is not contained* in the seed, but is derived from properties in the soil and the air, which the *organism* contained in the seed has the power of assimilating in order to build up its new tissue, and so to grow according to the law of its own nature.

Now notice carefully that S. Paul here avoids two common mistakes: (1) that of identifying the risen body with the present body, *as if they contained the same material molecules*; (2) and that of destroying all connection between the two—as if the risen body were altogether a

new creation without organic relation to the earthly body.

Our Lord uses the same figure of His own death and resurrection when He says, "Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."¹

Hence we may say that the answer which S. Paul gives to the first question, "How are the dead raised up?" is simply—through the action of death itself in dissolving the molecular constituents, and setting free the organism for a new effort of life.

This, he seems to say, is what we see in the ordinary processes of the growth of a grain of wheat, and this affords some analogy to what we may suppose will take place in the resurrection of the dead. We must be careful to observe that nothing more than an *analogy* is suggested, and that nothing more definite is asserted.

In regard to the second question, "With what body do they come?" S. Paul works out the analogy more in detail. He begins by pointing out that in the case of the seed, "that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain." The word "bare" (*γυμνόν*) calls attention to the greatness of the contrast between what is sown, and what is produced from the seed—between the bare, naked seed, stripped of all covering, stripped of its leaves, calyx, corolla, etc., and what springs from it after it has passed through death, and its molecular constituents have been dissolved. By this analogy he suggests a resurrection body far more glorious than that which is committed to the earth; for the plant with its stem, and leaves, and ears of grain, is far greater than the seed from which it sprang.

In his next statement S. Paul adds to the analogy *the*

¹S. John xii. 24.

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assertion that "GOD giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed its own body."

S. Paul does not say that GOD *shall* give to each a body as it *shall* please Him in the future, but that the body GOD gives at the resurrection is the body which was determined upon (ἡθέλησεν) when GOD created man, and that to each is assigned a body of its own.

Hence that body would seem to be the development of the organism under the different conditions of the resurrection life, but according to the laws which GOD Himself originally imposed upon it. Here the organism (the body) had the power of supplying its needs of life and growth, under the conditions of this world, by assimilation of certain molecular constituents by processes of digestion. Very different are the conditions of the life there, where "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more,"¹ and where "they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of GOD"²—that is apparently where the functions of eating and drinking and of reproduction find no place.

In that future life the body may have power to appropriate what it needs for its perfect life, yet that life may not require the assimilation of material molecules. In other words, there may be in the life beyond an identity of the organism (the body) without an identity of molecular tissue.

S. Paul then passes on to show that both in celestial and terrestrial bodies there is such a difference as to insure each body its own individual properties. As he points out, the flesh of men and the flesh of beasts is of a different genus, and is quite distinguishable from all others, so that each here has a body of his own. So, he says, shall it be

¹ Rev. vii. 16.

² S. Matt. xxii. 30.

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in the resurrection of the dead: each shall retain his own corporeal individuality and identity in the body which God assigned to him.

Then S. Paul, dropping the analogy, states four positive propositions concerning the character of the resurrection body which form the basis of all theological treatment of the subject. The propositions are that the body—

1. Is sown in corruption; is raised in incorruption.
 2. Is sown in dishonour; is raised in glory.
 3. Is sown in weakness; is raised in power.
 4. Is sown a natural body; is raised a spiritual body.
- “There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body.”

From these four propositions theologians have deduced the four characteristics of our bodies in the world beyond.

The treatment of these, however, requires a separate sermon, and we will conclude by pointing out that there are some who call themselves Christians, and profess to believe in a “resurrection of the dead,” who yet deny any resurrection of the body, confining the resurrection of the dead to the soul only. To such we would commend a careful study of S. Paul’s words, and a consideration of the fact that to the question “With what body do they come?” S. Paul does not answer, Without body; only the soul will rise again—but describes, by analogy, the nature of the resurrection body; and further asserts in four distinct propositions its positive characteristics.

It is, therefore, impossible to accept the teaching of the Epistle to the Corinthians—which even the most radical critics acknowledge to be absolutely authentic—and to deny either the *fact* of the resurrection of the dead, or the *doctrine* of the resurrection of the *body*.

Sermon LIII.

THE SIN OF MOSES.

(The Second Sunday after Easter.) ✓

NUMBERS XX. 12.

“And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them.”

 HE long wandering of the Israelites in the wilderness was drawing to a close. Almost forty years had passed since they left Egypt. For the second time they came to Kadesh-barnea, where thirty-eight years before the spies had brought the discouraging report of Canaan which had caused the Israelites to rebel, and had brought upon them God's judgment that all should die in the wilderness except the two faithful spies Caleb and Joshua. How much had passed in that time! how many trials had been borne! how many difficulties had been overcome! And now once more Moses is upon the very threshold of the promised land—when he stumbles and falls into sin, and forfeits the prize which was almost within his grasp.

The occasion of his temptation was the murmuring of the people on account of the lack of water at Kadesh. After all the tokens of God's care which they had experienced, the many miracles which had been wrought on their behalf, the manna and the quails to feed them, water from the rock at Rephidim, the sweetening of the waters of Marah—it seems strange that they had not learned the lesson of trust in God, learned that He would help them in

their necessity. But they seemed to have learned nothing, and when there was no water for the congregation they blamed Moses for it.

GOD seems to have passed over the sin of the people in His merciful compassion, and spake unto Moses, saying, "Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink."

Moses took the rod as GOD commanded him, and gathered the congregation before the rock; but, instead of speaking to the rock, he spoke to the people in bitter, angry words, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" And then with his rod Moses "smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly, and the congregation drank, and their beasts also." Then follows the announcement of Moses' sin, of GOD's displeasure, and of Moses' punishment. Neither he nor his brother Aaron were to enter into the land of Canaan.

I. What was the sin of Moses? Certainly, we should say it was disobedience in striking the rock instead of speaking to it as GOD had commanded, so destroying the type; for the rock was a type of Christ. It had once been smitten at Rephidim, as Christ was once crucified. It was not to be smitten again; for "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him."¹ Besides this, there was the sin of unseemly bitterness in speech in addressing the people. As the Psalmist tells us, "They provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips."²

But what was there beyond the hasty act and bitter

¹ Rom. vi. 9.

² Psalm cvi. 33.

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words? What was the *real* sin of Moses? To this two answers may be given.

1. First, we may trace both the striking of the rock and the vituperative address to the people to the besetting sin of Moses—temper, anger. The meekness for which Moses was so renowned¹ was an acquired virtue, the result of a long and faithful struggle against the besetting sin of his life, that quickness of temper which eighty years before had led him to kill an Egyptian.² This had been the cause of his exile from Egypt, and the eighty years that had passed since that day had been years of discipline, resulting in the acquisition of the virtue of meekness, in the possession of a habit of self-control.

Forty years had been spent in the solitudes of the desert, feeding Jethro's sheep, and learning to control his impetuous temperament, learning patience. Another forty years had been spent in a still harder trial—leading the quarrelsome, discontented Israelites through the wilderness, bearing with their faults, finding excuses for their rebellion, interceding with God for them. Surely this was what perfected in Moses the virtue of meekness, the power of self-control.

And now that the end was in sight, the goal almost reached, there was one more act of rebellion, one more manifestation of discontent on the part of the people. Moses was thrown off his guard, and yielded to his besetting sin of anger, he struck the rock, and bitterly berated the people to whom he had always been so tender and forbearing. He had, we may say, strong temptation; but strong temptation is not an excuse for sin. It was a trial he had faced often before, and had come through it victorious. But now, apparently without effort to resist, he yields to

¹ Cf. Num. xii. 3.

² Cf. Exodus ii. 12.

his old sin, and manifests such an outburst of temper as, probably, he had not given way to for many, many years.

We may learn from this never to count ourselves safe in regard to besetting sins; to remember that, even after they have been kept under control for years, the tendency is there; the temperament, though sanctified, is unchanged, and still has its weaknesses. We must always distrust ourselves, and watch and pray, and trust to the grace of God to help us in all temptations.

2. But Holy Scripture does not speak of anger as the sin of Moses. It goes deeper, and calls it "want of faith"—"And the Lord spake unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye *believed* Me not, to sanctify Me in the eyes of the children of Israel."

To many this seems strange. Anger, they say, was the besetting sin of Moses. It is easy to understand how he relapsed into anger; but want of faith!—Was not Moses' whole life a life of marvellous faith? What but faith could have enabled him to have faced the dangers of the wilderness, to have borne with the murmurings of the people for forty years? And now he was within sight of the promised land. How, then, could there have been any failure in his faith? Yet God distinctly describes Moses' sin as want of faith—"Ye believed Me not."

The meekness of Moses had its root in faith; he believed that the Lord could and would accomplish all that He had promised; and therefore he was ready to endure with patience the difficulties of the way. But now there is a secret failure of faith, unrecognized by Moses himself, but revealed by God. It was not a failure of objective faith, of intellectual faith, but of that perfect trust in God which is the subjective side of faith.

He did not doubt, probably, that God would perform a

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miracle and provide the people with water as He had done before; but it has been suggested that he, perhaps, thought that this act of rebellion on the part of the people might involve another long period of wandering in the wilderness. The generation which had sinned on this very spot thirty-eight years before, when they rejected the counsel of Joshua and Caleb, the faithful spies,¹ had all passed away, with the exception of four persons. Now that Moses finds that the new generation show the same discontented, rebellious spirit, he is discouraged, his self-control gives way. He thinks that perhaps, after all, God will reject this people.

These thoughts, perhaps, are not put into words, but they assail his faith; and losing his perfect trust in God, Moses loses his command over himself and strikes the rock, saying to the people, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" ascribing to himself and Aaron what really belonged to God—the power of working this miracle.

Have we not here a most important warning for ourselves, to watch against any impairment of our faith? It is quite possible for us to hold all the articles of the Creed, all the dogmas of the Catholic Faith, just as firmly as we ever held them, and yet to allow our real trust in God, our real faith in Him, to become impaired. And then how easily this weakness in faith leaves us a prey to old besetting sins. We must realize the twofold function of faith, where it touches the intellect and where it lays hold upon the will—the faith by which we believe in the revelation of God, and the faith by which we trust God in all the difficulties of our daily life. It was this latter faith which

¹ Cf. Num. xiv. 6-11.

failed in Moses; and its failure gave opportunity for his old besetting sin of anger to reassert itself.

II. And what was the punishment of Moses' sin?—He was not to enter Canaan; he was to die in the wilderness. How terribly severe! It is true, it was but a temporal punishment, a disappointment in this life. It did not affect the glorious reward which awaited the hero in the life beyond. Yet does it not seem to us almost unduly severe when compared with the leniency of God in regard to the want of faith on the part of the murmuring and rebellious people of Israel? We must remember that the guilt of a sin depends largely upon the light and grace with which God has endowed the sinner. Two men may commit the same sin, one in ignorance, the other with the clearest knowledge of its enormity. The guilt is quite different in the two cases.

Moses had enjoyed the closest communion with God, was possessed of a knowledge of God such as no other mortal of his day had. Moses had experienced God's love and mercy, and therefore had every reason to trust Him absolutely. And, besides, Moses knew the awfulness of disobedience to God's slightest command. His sin, therefore, was against light, against experience. It was a sin of disobedience in one who knew the grievousness of disobedience; it was a sin of distrust in one who knew the faithfulness of God. Hence, it comes under an altogether different category to the sins of a discontented, rebellious, half-civilized race of slaves who had but lately come into the enjoyment of their freedom.

God punishes the sins of good men severely, partly because the guilt is greater in their case, partly for their own eternal good, partly as an example of His absolute justice, not sparing those who are nearest and dearest to

Him. He punishes them thus for their own sakes; for "whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth."¹ He punishes them for the sake of others, that they may learn how grievous sin—even the sin of a saint—is in God's all-holy Eyes.

Sermon LIV.

THE LAME MAN AT THE BEAUTIFUL GATE OF THE TEMPLE.

(The Second Sunday after Easter.)

✓ .
ACTS III. 2.

"And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple."

THE first manifestation by the Apostles of miraculous power in healing is recorded in the opening verses of this chapter. It seems to have followed soon after the Day of Pentecost, when they received the Holy Ghost. Christ had promised them, just before His Ascension, "Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you."² And when at Pentecost the Holy Ghost descended, they first exhibited this power in winning the souls of their hearers, and in speaking "with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance."³ Then they used the same power in healing the lame man at the Beautiful gate of the temple.

I. The time and the place rendered the miracle one of

¹ Heb. xii. 6.

² Acts i. 8.

³ Acts ii. 4.

great publicity. It was at the ninth hour—the hour of prayer, the hour when the incense was offered—and the place was the “Beautiful” gate of the Temple, which just then would be thronged with worshippers entering its courts.

It is not possible to decide with certainty which gate this was. The only eye-witness of the Temple as it stood in our Lord’s time, whose works have come down to us, is Josephus, and he gives two descriptions of the Temple gates which it seems impossible to reconcile.¹ This gate appears to have been on the east, and to have been of Corinthian brass, of such exquisite workmanship, that Josephus tells us it greatly excelled the other gates, which were covered with gold and silver. Some think it is the gate called “The gate of Nicanor.”

At this Beautiful gate, kindly hands daily placed a poor, crippled man, one who had been lame from his birth, and so had never experienced the joyous freedom of movement which he saw in those around him. He depended on the kind offices of friends to bring him to his place at the gate of the Temple; and then he depended on the alms of strangers to enable him to obtain means of prolonging his life of suffering. There he lay, a striking contrast to the Beautiful gate of the Temple!

This was the most elaborate and perfect of all the gates—a triumph of the artist’s design and of the worker’s skill, representing the highest perfection of taste and workmanship which Art had reached. And in startling contrast, by it lay a cripple, lame from his birth; poor, ill-clad, deformed, helpless. Surely this is typical of what one sees everywhere in the world now; the advances of art, of architecture, of manufacture, of education, of civilization,

¹ Cf. “De Bell. Jud.,” V., v. 3; and “Ant. Jud.,” XV., xi. 5.

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side by side with squalor and misery, disease and sin!

The material progress of the world has indeed been wonderful, and is well represented by the Beautiful gate of the Temple. The moral progress of the world, apart from Christ, has been most disappointing; for to-day there are multitudes who know not the Name of Christ; or, if they know His Name, know not His power; who are lying, in their misery, crippled like that poor man, asking alms to enable them to prolong their miserable existence, instead of asking of Christ the healing of their diseases, the remission of their sins.

II. "Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk." Another contrast, even more striking—the contrast between the power of money and the power of grace. Money, S. Peter had none; but what he had—the gift of grace, the power of the Holy Ghost—that he freely gave; and that not only healed the man's crippled body, but transformed his crippled soul.

How much money can do in this world! In politics, to our shame, we know its power; in society we see its influence in social degradation; in commerce we appreciate its potency to control markets; in finance we recognize its capacity to make more money; in pleasure we perceive its ability to obtain almost everything that pleasure's votaries can desire. The power of money is indeed great in this world!

But it is not almighty. There are some things which money cannot do in this world. It cannot heal the sick. All the treasures of the Indies could not have cured that

lame man. Half his fortune cannot restore to health the crippled child of the millionaire. Again, money cannot atone for sin. The conscience-stricken criminal cannot purchase peace, even with the ransom of a king. And yet again, money cannot give happiness. The blasé pleasure-seeker can purchase with money every kind of excitement; but the time comes when excitement palls, and the surfeited and heart-sick wretch learns that money cannot purchase *happiness*.

In contrast with the power of money we have the power of grace. And what cannot grace accomplish? It can work miracles; sometimes miracles of healing of body, as in the case of this lame man; always the greater miracle of the healing of the soul. It can impart that true happiness which consists in union with God; and can give power to bear, with loving patience, all the burdens of earth, whether of sickness, or poverty, or sorrow.

There is a suggestive story associated with this passage. It is recorded that once when S. Thomas Aquinas visited Pope Innocent IV., a large sum of gold was being counted in the Pontiff's presence. "You see, Thomas," said Innocent, "that the Church is no longer able to say, as in time past, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "True, Holy Father," replied the Saint, "but neither is the Church, as of old, able to say to the lame, 'Arise and walk.'" In gaining worldly wealth and power, the Church had lost its spiritual power.

III. People wondered when they saw the miracle, and evidently ascribed it to the personal power of S. Peter and S. John. And when S. Peter saw this he corrected their view, saying, "Why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?" Then, after bearing witness to the death and

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resurrection of Christ, he adds, "And His Name through faith in His Name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know : yea, the faith which is by Him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all."

How often the world mistakes the *instrument* for the *agent* ! How people love to rest in secondary causes, instead of tracing things to the first Cause, GOD ! So is it with the marvels of grace. People speak of the eloquence of the preacher, or the wisdom and diligence of the pastor ; and forget that it is GOD's grace which produces the wonderful effects which we are so ready to ascribe to the human instrument. So, too, with the skill of the physician or surgeon. It is but the instrument ; the skill itself is GOD-given ; all men have not it ; men are but instruments in GOD's hands, and it is to GOD to Whom praise should be ascribed.

IV. Lastly, let us observe the contrast between the man before and after the healing—"And all the people saw him walking and praising GOD : And they knew that it was he which sat for alms at the Beautiful gate of the Temple : and they were filled with wonder and amazement at that which had happened unto him."

What a change there was in the man physically ! For forty years he had been a helpless cripple. Now he walks and leaps in the joyous exercise of his new-found strength. But observe, he ascribes the praise to GOD ; and in this he shows that GOD's gift of healing to his body had reached also his soul ! We do not in our own days often see cripples suddenly healed ; but we do see souls, which for forty years perhaps, or more, have been bound in the chains of sin, set free by the power of the Name of Christ : crippled souls rejoicing in the powers of the new life of grace ; those who could not walk in the ways of GOD's

commandment joyously running in those ways; men whose lives are transformed, who are indeed new creatures, and who gratefully confess that they owe the change to the power of GOD's grace, to faith in the Name of Jesus Christ.

The world wonders at such souls; for they are the most convincing evidence of the power of Christianity. It is not beautiful churches, helpful though they be; it is not eloquent sermons, nor imposing ritual, nor great learning; but lives bearing witness to the power of grace, which most effectively win the world to God.

Sermon LV.

BALAAM.

(The Third Sunday after Easter.)

NUMBERS XXII. 18, 19.

"And Balaam answered and said unto the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my GOD, to do less or more. Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more."



WE have brought before us in the lesson to-day one of the most mysterious and interesting of all the characters of the Old Testament. We may place Balaam, together with Melchizedek and Job, among those mysterious persons, who, though outside of GOD's covenant with Abraham, yet had a clear knowledge of GOD and enjoyed an intimate communion with Him.

But apart from the mystery which surrounds Balaam's past, and the question in regard to the manner in which

he came to know the true GOD—his history and character, by the very perplexities which they suggest, challenge our attention and fascinate our interest. If we confine ourselves, as indeed we must, to what the Old Testament tells us about him, his character is so complex, and in some respects so contradictory, that, left to ourselves, we should find it very difficult to decide whether he was indeed a great and good man, or the very reverse.

We are, however, not left to our own unenlightened judgment on this matter; for no less than three writers of the New Testament refer to Balaam, and all alike in terms of utter reprobation. We have, therefore, the advantage of starting upon our study of his character with the inspired verdict of Holy Scripture to guide us. S. Peter says that he “loved the wages of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man’s voice forbad the madness of the prophet.”¹ S. Jude refers to him as an example of evil men who “ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward”;² while in the Epistle to the angel of the Church in Pergamos we read, “Thou hast there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balac to cast a stumbling-block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed unto idols, and to commit fornication.”³

From these passages we may learn that Balaam’s besetting sin was covetousness—loving the wages of unrighteousness for reward—and that this led him to cast stumbling-blocks in the way of GOD’S people, tempting them to idolatry and impurity.

If we now turn back to his story as recorded in the Book of Numbers, we find that he was a man who enjoyed a very great reputation as a Seer, a reputation so wide that it had

¹ 2 S. Peter ii. 15, 16.

² S. Jude 11.

³ Rev. ii. 14.

spread through many countries; for Pethor (which was probably at the junction of the Sagur with the Euphrates, near Carchemish) where Balaam dwelt, was some five hundred miles north-east of Moab; and the journey which the emissaries of Balak undertook, with its return, must have occupied at least a month.

Balaam's reputation as a Seer seems to have rested upon something more than mere imposture or incantation; for he had a very real knowledge of the true God, evidently made it the principle of his life to obey God, and was the recipient of revelations from God. Indeed, from the time the messengers of Balak introduced themselves to him, to the time when, after his fruitless journey, he leaves Balak, Balaam displays the principles of a strictly conscientious prophet of God, who cannot say less or more than God inspires him to utter.

But running throughout his conduct, side by side with his profession of conscientious submission to God's Will, is a strange thread of inconsistency, which often renders his actions quite contradictory to his principles; for while on the one side he manifests a clear knowledge of God—of God's character and God's Will—and proclaims his entire submission to Him as controlling his life, when he says, "If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my God, to do less or more"; yet we not only find in him the sins of ambition and covetousness, but apparently a heart estranged from God, and affections set on things evil. For alongside of his profession of complete submission to God's Will we find a determination to get his own way.

He proclaims God's unchangeableness—"God is not a man, that He should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent: hath He said, and shall He not do it? or

hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good? ”¹—yet he strives to obtain from God a reversal of the command, “Thou shalt not go.” Again, while he claims to be a most conscientious man, we find him wrestling with conscience until conscience in him becomes but a name, a thing so warped and perverted as to be worse than useless.

Confining ourselves to that part of Balaam’s history contained in the lesson for to-day we have three scenes :

I. In the first we see Balak’s embassy reaching Balaam with their master’s message. Balaam probably knew something of the history of the Israelites as God’s people, and scarcely needed to have delayed his answer to the request that he should curse them. However, he says to the messengers, “Lodge here this night, and I will bring you word again, as the Lord shall speak unto me.”

God came to Balaam in the night and said unto him, “Thou shalt not go with them; thou shalt not curse the people: for they are blessed.” God’s answer is most clear; but observe that Balaam did not tell the princes of Moab what God had said, that the Israelites were blessed, and therefore could not be cursed. He only says, “The Lord refuseth to give me leave to go with you,” thus leaving the way open for their return with greater bribes and for his own further temptation.

II. In the second scene the embassy returns with princes more honourable and offers more magnificent—“Let nothing, I pray thee, hinder thee from coming unto me: For I will promote thee unto very great honour, and I will do whatsoever thou sayest unto me: come therefore, I pray thee, curse me this people.” Here it is that Balaam speaks the words of our text and sets forth the principle of his action as a prophet—“If Balak would give me his house

¹ Num. xxiii. 19.

full of silver and gold, I cannot go beyond the word of the Lord my GOD, to do less or more." But he adds, "Now therefore, I pray you, tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more."

He knew what GOD had said—that he was not to go, that Israel was not to be cursed; on the contrary, that Israel was blessed. He knew GOD's character, that He could not change; yet he says, "Tarry ye also here this night, that I may know what the Lord will say unto me more." What more could GOD say? GOD had fully answered the question—Balaam was not to go; Israel was not to be cursed.

It is quite evident what more he *wants* GOD to say. He desires at least to get permission to *go* with the messengers, even though he may not curse Israel. And he obtains this permission; how, we are not told; either by wrestling with his conscience until it becomes obedient to his inclination—for many men do this; they wrestle with conscience until they compel it to give assent to their wishes, and then persuade themselves that it is GOD's Voice—or it may have been that GOD did give him permission to go, as GOD does sometimes allow us to have our own way, even when that way is contrary to GOD's Will and to our own duty. Or again it may have been, as in the case of Pharaoh, that GOD used Balaam as an instrument for His glory, to proclaim the wonderful future of Israel, to utter the glorious prophecy concerning the Star which should come out of Jacob, and the Sceptre which should rise out of Israel. But that Balaam's action in going with the messengers was displeasing to GOD, is distinctly revealed; for we read that "GOD's anger was kindled because he went."

There are many men who will not positively break the

letter of GOD's commandments, but will get around them and break them in the spirit. Balaam was one of these. He will go into temptation, but not yield; he will receive the honours which Balak offers, though he dare not—*perhaps cannot*—utter the curse on those whom GOD has blessed. But if he cannot himself curse them, he will get around it by teaching the Midianites to seduce GOD's people to idolatry and impurity, so that they may bring a curse upon themselves; for this is what we are told Balaam did after he left Balak.¹

III. The third scene displays GOD's mercy towards Balaam in sending an angel to withstand him. The ass on which Balaam rides *sees* the angel; the prophet does not, until the ass speaks. Then Balaam realizes his danger and says, "I have sinned . . . now therefore, if it displease thee, I will get me back again."

GOD's warning awakens Balaam's conscience; he realizes his sin, and offers to do the only thing which is right—to go back, to give up his sin. He is, however, permitted to proceed under the same condition, that he shall only speak the word that GOD tells him. Very probably this was the result of another wrestling with his conscience, until it falls back upon the old compromise. Or it may have been that GOD distinctly allowed him to go, to his own soul's hurt, as a punishment for his wilfulness, but with the warning to be careful only to prophesy according to GOD's inspiration.

The chapter ends with Balaam's reception by Balak. And in the next two chapters we read how GOD uses the prophet as an instrument for declaring the glorious future of Israel. And then later we learn that, after blessing GOD's people with his lips, Balaam goes to work to bring

¹ Cf. Num. xxxi. 16, and chapter xxv. ; also Rev. ii. 14.

a curse upon them by instructing their enemies how to tempt them to idolatry and impurity.

IV. The lessons we may learn from the history of Balaam are many. Let us confine ourselves to-day to two of the most obvious.

1. Surely it teaches us first the worthlessness of keeping the letter of God's commandments when we are violating their spirit, when we are striving in our actions to evade them, even while with our lips we are proclaiming our obedience to them. It teaches us that an intellectual knowledge of truth is quite compatible with great moral perversion, and that it is useless to serve God with our lips when our hearts are far from Him.

2. The other lesson to which I have already drawn your attention is the danger of trifling with conscience. Conscience is not, as some suppose, a separate power or faculty of the soul. It is really the practical judgment in man—the moral sense—and it varies according to education and light. A man's conscience, then, at any given time is the manifestation of his moral sense; and that may be perverted into entire opposition to God's Will. Many atrocious deeds have been done in obedience to conscience, that is, to perverted conscience.

Conscience is not God's Voice, though, where trained in the way of God's commandments and enlightened by His Holy Spirit, it becomes the means by which God's Voice speaks to the soul. On the other hand, if conscience is trifled with it soon becomes the echo of our own desires. An enlightened conscience is one of man's greatest endowments, a God-given guide to lead him through life. A perverted conscience is man's greatest curse; for it supplies him with excuses for doing the evil which in his heart he desires to do.

The Duty of Obedience, etc. 50

There are few characters in Holy Scripture more worthy of our study than Balaam's, few warnings more terrible than the example of the prophet, "which heard the words of GOD, which saw the vision of the Almighty, falling into a trance, but having his eyes open";¹ and yet strove to ruin the people whom in GOD's Name he had blessed, strove to bring to naught GOD's purpose for them, and who died miserably, fighting against GOD and GOD's people.

Sermon LVI.

THE DUTY OF OBEDIENCE, AND OF DISOBEDIENCE, TO AUTHORITY.

(The Third Sunday after Easter.)

ACTS IV. 19.

"But Peter and John answered and said unto them, Whether it be right in the sight of GOD to hearken unto you more than unto GOD, judge ye."

HE words of my text bring before us a question of great difficulty, but of great importance; a question which in our own day presses upon Churchmen more, perhaps, than for many generations; a question which, difficult as it is, should be honestly faced, carefully considered, and conscientiously decided. The question of the duty of obedience or of disobedience to constituted authority.

I. In regard to the first part of the subject we shall, I hope, all agree that we owe obedience to constituted

¹ Num. xxiv. 4.

authority, even when that authority is hostile to us, and when its judgments seem to us unwise and even, perhaps, unjust. This is taught us in the Epistle for to-day, in the words of S. Peter, "Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be to the king, as supreme; or unto governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that do well. For so is the Will of GOD, that with well doing ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men: as free, and not using your liberty for a cloke of maliciousness, but as the servants of GOD. Honour all men. Love the brotherhood. Fear GOD. Honour the king." ¹ And we have similar teaching in the Epistle to the Romans, where S. Paul writes, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of GOD: the powers that be are ordained of GOD." ²

Now the power under which S. Peter and S. Paul lived, and to which they refer in these words, was not a Christian power. It was the Roman Empire. The king was the Roman Cæsar. And the Apostles teach Christians to recognize and to obey the representatives of Cæsar, the civil magistrates, and indeed all rightly constituted authority. This power recognized and, indeed, enforced things which were wrong both in principle and practice, such as the institution of slavery, which was wrong in principle, as an infringement of the rights of man; and wrong in practice, in the cruelty and even immorality which it allowed and protected.

S. Paul, however, preached to Christians the duty of recognizing the laws of the state, and set an example of obeying them. He even enjoins on slaves the duty of subjection to their masters; for in the passages in the Epistles

¹ I S. Peter ii. 13-17.

² Rom. xiii. 1.

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to the Ephesians and Colossians,¹ in which he exhorts servants to be obedient to their masters, the word translated "servants" is "slaves." Nowhere does he say that, slavery being wrong both in principle and practice, slaves should refuse obedience to their masters. And further, in the Epistle to the Romans he gives the reason for obedience to constituted authority, tracing it to its source in God's power, when he writes, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of GOD: the powers that be are ordained of GOD."

We may, therefore, dismiss this part of our subject, taking it for granted that all agree that obedience to constituted authority is a duty, even though that obedience be painful.

II. But a further question demands our attention, and is less easy of solution. Are there limits to this obedience to authority? Are there occasions where obedience ceases to bind us; and disobedience, instead of being a crime, becomes a virtue and a duty?

The history of our race, of our nation, and of our Church, supplies an answer in the affirmative; and, moreover, Holy Scripture also clearly inculcates disobedience to authority under certain conditions.

History shows us that every step, from despotism to constitutional government, from tyranny to freedom, has been won by disobedience, and by suffering for that disobedience. There is not a nation to-day in the civilized world that does not honour its martyrs who have shed their blood in the cause of freedom, that does not count among its greatest heroes men who had the courage to attempt to throw off the heavy yoke of tyranny, who paid the penalty with their lives, and watered with their blood the

¹ Cf. Eph. vi. 5; Col. iii. 22.

seeds of liberty ! These men were disobedient to the constituted authority of their day. Their disobedience brought suffering on themselves, but won freedom and constitutional government for their nation. Were they right or wrong? Were they criminals or patriots? The barons who forced King John to sign the Magna Charta—under which class shall we place them? No Englishman would hesitate in his answer.

The history of the Church supplies us with many similar instances of the duty of disobedience under certain clearly defined conditions, the earliest instance of which is brought before us in the words of my text. Immediately after the Day of Pentecost the Apostles S. Peter and S. John healed a lame man at the Beautiful gate of the Temple, and took occasion, from the wonder and amazement which this miracle aroused, to preach Christianity to the people—the doctrine of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and the power of grace which comes through faith in His Name.

The ecclesiastical authorities of the day, Annas the high priest, and Caiaphas, and others, summoned the Apostles before them, and after carefully examining both the facts of the miracle and the teaching of the Apostles, "*They called them, and commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the Name of Jesus.*" Here we have the judicial decision of the chief ecclesiastical power in Jerusalem, a power which every loyal Jew recognized, even if he could not altogether respect it. And we must remember that at this time the Apostles had not separated themselves from the Temple and its services, and that even many years later S. Paul recognized and pleaded before the same court.¹

¹ Cf. Acts xxiii. 1-7.

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How did the Apostles receive the decision of the ecclesiastical court? They replied to their judges, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." That is, they distinctly and fearlessly declined to obey. And we find in the next chapter that they had to suffer for their disobedience; for, being a second time brought before the Sanhedrim, they were beaten, and again commanded "that they should not speak in the Name of Jesus."¹ They took their punishment gladly; for we read that "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name. And daily in the temple, and in every house, they *ceased not* to teach and preach Jesus Christ." The Apostles here, then, and on other occasions, set an example of deliberate disobedience to authority.

Let us pause a moment and consider what would have been the result if they had acted otherwise and obeyed the commands of their ecclesiastical superiors. The result would have been, that neither you nor I would ever have been Christians, that Christianity would have died at the moment of its birth. We owe Christianity, then, to the rightful exercise of the duty of disobedience to authority; not disobedience through individual self-will, but at the direct command of God, speaking through the Holy Spirit to the consciences of the Apostles.

As we read the pages of the Church's history we find many crises in which disobedience to authority has saved the Church, and this in matters both of doctrine and practice. In the fourth century, when the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity was not only challenged but denied by the

¹ Acts v. 40.

great majority of the bishops of the Church, we owe its preservation largely to one man who fearlessly disobeyed both the civil and ecclesiastical authorities of his day, to one bishop who had twice to flee as an exile, but who never surrendered the Faith. "Athanasius contra Mundum" has passed into a proverb. It describes the condition of the Christian Church in the days of Athanasius, when he stood forth the solitary champion of the Divinity of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ! When Hosius of Cordova,¹ president of the council of Nicæa; and Liberius, Pope of Rome, yielded to the pressure of the ecclesiastical and civil forces and accepted a definition which was really a denial of the Divinity of Christ, Athanasius stood firm, and by his disobedience won back the world to Christ!

Again and again in the great spiritual revivals which have uplifted the Church after periods of religious torpor or ecclesiastical corruption, we find the authorities of the Church in opposition to every effort for deeper spiritual life. We have a notable instance of it in our own Church, in the treatment of John Wesley; and in our own day, the change from the irreverence and irreligion, say, of sixty years ago, has been won step by step by following the example of the Apostles, who, when they were threatened and punished by the ecclesiastical authorities, and commanded to abstain from teaching what they believed to be the Truth, replied, "Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye"; and then, acting upon this principle, boldly disobeyed.

In our own day, too, the restoration of the Holy Eucharist to its right position in the Church's Service, the re-introduction of daily Service, of vested choirs; not to speak of the restoration of Church fabrics, and of the

¹ The Arian Formula adopted at the Second Synod of Sirmium, A.D. 357.

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proper ceremonies and vestments of her ministers, has been won step by step by resistance to the authorities of the Church.

III. So far there can be little difference of opinion in regard to the facts we have been treating; but the difficulty which remains for our consideration is to determine when it is right to obey and when to disobey authority. It is quite impossible to lay down any certain rule.

Where obedience only brings disappointment to ourselves, where it involves only an infringement of our own personal rights, it would seem—following the teaching of S. Paul—that we should submit ourselves to constituted authority, even though we question the wisdom and justice of the decisions of that authority. But where the voice of GOD is clear to us, and not to us only, but to many others; where the question is not one of infringement of our own rights, but of the rights of GOD's Church, of the truths of GOD's revelation; then it seems that we should follow the example of S. Peter and S. John—disobey, and take the consequences. They rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame and pain for Christ's Name; and we like them must gladly endure the consequences of a disobedience which we believe to be our highest duty.

The Apostles did not speak disrespectfully of Annas and Caiaphas and the high priests, although they boldly continued to preach the Truth and to suffer for the Truth's sake. Their boldness and their sufferings planted Christianity, and we inherit the fruits of their labours. It would follow, therefore, that we must be content to sow the seed, or to water what has been sown; to bear meekly and patiently the difficulties and sufferings which are the consequences of our contention for the faith once delivered

to the saints, and for the Church's heritage of Catholic worship; leaving it to others who may come after us to reap what we have sown, in more peaceful days, if God should grant such to the Church in our land.

Sermon LVII.

THE DUTY AND HAPPINESS OF OBEDIENCE TO LAW.

(The Fourth Sunday after Easter.)

DEUTERONOMY IV. I.

“Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the Lord GOD of your fathers giveth you.”



THE title of this book, Deuteronomy, with its ever recurring subject, “the Law” which God gave to His people through Moses, suggests the consideration of the significance and obligation of law.

I. What do we mean by “law”? It is a word which it is not easy to define, because it has so many meanings and is applied in so many ways. But if, without attempting a definition, we try to get at the root idea, may it not be expressed somewhat thus? By “law” we do not mean arbitrary enactments, but the utterance of immutable and necessary principles. God's law is the revelation of God's mind, the revelation of the principles of truth and righteousness through various channels, such as external nature, man's own constitution, and Holy Scripture.

of Obedience to Law. §6

The laws of nature are not, as commonly supposed, the observed phenomena of nature, but the causes of those phenomena; and those causes or laws belong to nature as created by God, or, in other words, are impressed upon nature by the Will of God.

As with external nature, so with man, the laws of his being are certain great principles which have their cause in God, their fulfilment insures life and happiness, while their disregard leads to misery and death. These laws are revealed in Holy Scripture in a series of positive enactments, as, for instance, in the Ten Commandments under the old dispensation, and in the Sermon on the Mount under the new. But centuries of experience and investigation have proved them to be based on immutable principles; so that no man has been able to suggest either an improvement or an abrogation of them.

The divine Law, then, may be regarded as the Voice of God to man, revealing certain great principles of righteousness. It cannot change, because truth and righteousness, upon which it is based, are immutable.

Human law has for its purpose the good of the community, or the welfare of man as a social being. It is chiefly concerned with restraints which it puts upon man's actions; but, as S. Paul points out,¹ it is a terror only to evil-doers; for it restrains only those actions which are injurious either to the individual or to the community, and such restraint is part of "the perfect law of liberty."² "Law" and "liberty" are thought by some to imply a contradiction; but in them we have only a paradox, not a contradiction; and moreover, not only are they not contradictory, but they are mutually complementary; for, as we shall try to show, law without liberty is not law in its true

¹ Cf. Rom. xiii. 1-5.

² S. James i. 25.

sense, and liberty without law cannot be realized practically, but must degenerate into license.

II. We have attempted, not to define, but to investigate, the root idea suggested by the term "law." Let us now do the same with the term "liberty." It is a much misunderstood word; for liberty is not, as some suppose, the absence of all restraint, freedom from every law, absolute independence. Such ideas may be associated with the word "liberty" in thought, but they certainly cannot be realized in fact. And again, liberty does not mean the power to do as we please, regardless of consequences to ourselves or to others. Such liberty is simply anarchy, and soon produces the fruits of anarchy—strife, brutal tyranny, and degradation.

When the oak sapling is first planted in the ground it is fastened to a stake, which supports it in an upright position and enables it to withstand the strength of the winter's storm, and to grow and develop according to the true law of its own nature. Does the stake to which it is tied interfere with the liberty of the oak tree? It upholds it against the stormy winds and restrains it from growing as it would otherwise, bowed to the ground, twisted and gnarled by the winter's blasts; but it leaves it free to grow and to develop according to the glorious powers of its own nature.

We educate a child, and in so doing restrain in it tendencies which would injure its character. For instance, we restrain tendencies to untruthfulness, to theft, to violent anger. In thus educating a child are we interfering with the true liberty of man? Should that child be allowed, in the interests of freedom, to indulge in falsehood, dishonesty and bad temper?

Or, to take yet another example—the nation to which we belong—are its laws restraining murder, adultery, dis-

honesty and perjury, an interference with the true liberty of the individual Englishman? Is the murderer or the thief a freer man than the peaceable, honest citizen? A moment's consideration will show us that law which only restrains what is contrary to the best interests and true life of the individual or community is not inconsistent with the most perfect freedom, with the most real liberty. And further, a little reflection will convince us that liberty can never be realized or enjoyed, either by the individual or the community, except under the dominion of law, and that liberty will be greatest where law is based upon the most complete recognition of the true principles of life.

Law, then, is perfect in proportion as it corresponds with eternal verities, with absolute righteousness. For this reason GOD's law is perfect, because it is the expression of GOD's mind, and therefore of eternal truth.

An immense stride was made in natural science when Lord Bacon taught, in his "*Novum Organon*," that philosophic theories as to what things *ought to be* must be abandoned, and that the study of nature must be begun over again by the investigation of *facts*, of what things *are*, with a view to acquiring a knowledge of the laws of nature. The fruit of this may be seen in the marvellous discoveries and inventions of our own age; for when the laws of nature are known, or, rather, *in proportion as they are known*, we can control nature by obeying its laws. But this is as true of the laws of man's own being as of the laws of external nature. By obeying the law we become free, and in our freedom learn to control forces which before were either adverse or useless to us.

III. In giving the divine Law to the Jews through Moses, and again to Christians through Jesus Christ, God reveals what man unaided could never have discovered—

the true principles of his own moral nature, and of his relation to GOD, to his neighbour and to himself—and it is in obeying that law that man finds his true liberty and his only happiness. In our text Moses calls upon Israel to obey GOD's laws, that they "may live, and go in and possess the land" which GOD promised them.

We may apply this commandment, and the promise attached to it, not merely to the Mosaic law and to the Jewish people, but to all true law and to all mankind, remembering that by true law we mean that which is ultimately GOD's law, because based upon the principles of truth and righteousness. The promise of the text is two-fold, that obedience to law shall result in life and the possession of the land.

1. First, obedience is the path which leads to *life*. We find this in every part of man's nature; in his body, obedience to the laws of health is rewarded by the enjoyment of physical life; obedience to the laws of thought secures the development of intellectual life; while obedience to the moral law results in the development of character and in the enjoyment of happiness.

2. Secondly, obedience is the path which leads to *progress*. The reward of obedience promised to the Israelites was the possession of the land. And in how many ways do we find this same reward bestowed upon those who are obedient to GOD's laws now! "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."¹ Those who, by fulfilling GOD's laws, obtain self-control—which is the virtue on which meekness depends—do inherit this earth, in the sense that they possess it and rule it. But there is another and greater land which passes under their dominion, and that is the earth of their own nature; for it is only by

¹S. Matt. v. 5.

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learning self-control that we really gain possession of ourselves. And yet again, it is by obedience to GOD's commands that we win the kingdom of heaven. Every step *forward*, then, whether in regard to GOD, our neighbour, or ourselves, is the result of obedience to law.

3. The Israelites were promised not only life and the land of Canaan, but that which would make life happy; but this depended on their obedience to all GOD's laws, and much of their happiness was lost, much even of misery was caused, by their disobedience, by their rebellion against GOD. So it is with us; obedience to law is the pathway to life, to liberty, and therefore to happiness, not only in this world, but in the world to come.

The reward of obedience here is life eternal in that kingdom where there will be no temptation to disobey, where absolute obedience to the Will of GOD will be the creature's intensest joy. Again, the reward of obedience here is liberty, a liberty which, begun in this world, culminates in the glorious freedom of the sons of GOD, in that land where life will be free to develop without hindrance or possibility of being warped by sin. And lastly, the reward of obedience here will be happiness beyond the power of words to describe, a happiness for which man was created by GOD, the happiness of knowing GOD as He is, and loving GOD with every power of man's glorified and perfected nature.

Sermon LVIII.

ANANIAS AND SAPPHIRA.

(The Fourth Sunday after Easter.) ✓

ACTS V. 3.

"But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost?"



OD'S judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira stands out upon the pages of Holy Writ, together with His somewhat similar judgments upon Uzzah, and upon Korah, Dathan and Abiram. In each of these three instances the sin punished with such awful severity was a sin more or less intimately connected with the worship of God. In Uzzah's case it was a breach of the ceremonial law; in the case of Korah and his followers, an unjustifiable assumption of priesthood; while in that of Ananias and Sapphira, S. Peter tells us it was a lie to the Holy Ghost.

In each of these cases God's interposition in judgment was so awful and so unusual that it challenges our attention and forces upon us the duty of carefully investigating the character of the sin, in order that we may understand the warning conveyed by God's extraordinary punishment of it.

I. If we ask, What was the sin of Ananias? most people would probably reply, It was the sin of lying. And yet this answer is most inadequate and misleading; for it was not merely the telling of a lie, bad as that would have been, which brought God's immediate punishment upon

Ananias and Sapphira. 50

Ananias. There are degrees of guilt in lying. The deliberate lie is far worse than one that is unpremeditated; and the lie to which God is called to witness by an oath—perjury—is worse still. But the lie which Ananias told does not come under either of these classes. Its intrinsic heinousness, its terrible guilt, was that it was a lie told to God. Twice S. Peter insists on this as the special character of the sin of Ananias.

If we are to understand the full significance of God's punishment of Ananias, we must realize that God's special judgments not only mark great sins, but are manifested only on peculiar occasions for the edification or warning of the Church at large. What, then, was the occasion of this manifestation of severity upon God's part? It was a great crisis of the world's religious history, when a startling example was given as a warning against serious and dangerous error in the worship of God; and we shall understand this the better if we compare the case of Ananias with the similar sudden judgment upon Uzzah.

We are all familiar with the story of Uzzah, how that when David brought the ark from Kirjath-jearim to Jerusalem, it was placed in a new ox-cart driven by Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab;¹ and at the stumbling of the oxen, when the ark was endangered, Uzzah put forth his hand, apparently to steady the ark, "And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah; and God smote him there for his error; and there he died by the ark of God."

Uzzah broke a mere ceremonial law which had lapsed into disuse for many generations—the law which required that the ark when moved was to be carried only by the Kohathites, after that it had been covered with a veil of badgers' skins, over which was spread a blue cloth.²

¹ Cf. 2 Sam. vi. 1-12.

² Cf. Exodus xxv. 12-16; Num. iv. 5, 6, 15, 19, 20.

During the wanderings in the wilderness and the conquest of Canaan by Joshua, the Mosaic ritual seems to have been allowed to fall into disuse; and during the long period covered by the Book of Judges and the First Book of Samuel it seems to have been altogether neglected. It is, therefore, quite probable that Uzzah was personally ignorant of the law which he broke in touching the ark; so that his sin, which was so severely punished, was not one of intentional irreverence.

Why, then, did God visit with such awful punishment a man who, according to his light, was engaged in a good and religious action in bringing the ark to Jerusalem?—Certainly, it was to give some needed warning, to teach some important lesson. But what was this lesson?

It is not difficult to see. The occasion was one of the great crises in the religious worship not only of Judaism but of the world. David was about to establish the temple services, and that which was hanging in the balance was whether those services should be performed with the stately ceremonial enjoined by God through Moses, or whether they should be of the simple character which we associate with what is commonly called "Puritanical worship." For the careful ceremonial which God had enjoined for moving the ark belonged to the one, while the jolting ox-cart was a fair type of the other.

The question was one for all time; since the law, with its types and figures of good things to come, was our school-master to lead us to Christ. Had the ox-cart type of worship prevailed, the preparation through Judaism would not have foreshadowed the work and sacrifice of our Lord, nor the worship of the Christian Church.

This question was settled by the judgment upon Uzzah. We have no reason to suppose that Uzzah suffered any-

thing more than a temporal punishment for the sin of ignorance; just as a man who violates a law of nature by inadvertently touching an electric light wire pays the penalty with his life, though his eternity is not thereby affected.

So Uzzah died for his people's good, to teach them to worship God according to God's own revelation. The result of Uzzah's punishment we see in the restoration of the Levitical ritual, both in bringing the ark to Jerusalem,¹ and in the Temple services, which up to the time of our Lord were performed with scrupulous care and external reverence.

II. In the establishment of Christianity as the fulfilment of Judaism and the religion of the whole human race, another danger threatened, another crisis had to be met. Judaism was a system of minute external rules and precepts, which, while they were valueless apart from a spirit of devotion, were God's appointed means of expressing the religion of the heart. Men could, therefore, judge of a Jew's righteousness by his exterior religious life, by the faithfulness with which he fulfilled the Mosaic law.

Christianity, on the other hand, while not without the externals of religious worship, is mainly a religion, not of rules, but of principles; not of ceremonies, but of spiritual worship. But of another's spiritual state no man can judge; it must be left to the judgment of God.

It was, therefore, of the utmost importance that at the very beginning of Christianity men should be warned in regard to just this point—that God *does* judge, that God does demand *sincerity* in religious worship, that "God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."²

¹ Cf. 1 Chron. xv. 26.

² S. John iv. 24.

The danger at the outset of Christianity was that, as man cannot read his neighbour's heart, a premium, so to speak, was put on hypocrisy. The Jew had to *do* a great deal in order to get the reputation for legal righteousness. The Christian had only to *profess* a great deal in order to gain the reputation of a saint.

At the particular period of which this chapter of the Acts treats, the sacrifice of all a man's worldly goods for the common benefit of the Christian community was regarded as the very height of sacrifice and of sanctity. It mattered not whether a man had little or much; if he gave all that he had, he fulfilled the Christian ideal of poverty.

Ananias and Sapphira desired the praise of men, the reputation for just such an act of sacrifice, while retaining part of their goods. Having land, they sold it; and, laying a certain sum at the Apostles' feet, pretended that they were giving all which they had received for the sale of their property, when they were only giving part.

The lesson needed in the infant Church was that, while a man may be deceived, God cannot be deceived; and that to attempt to deceive God is the grossest sin, the greatest sacrilege. No lesson could have been more important in the early days of the Christian Church than this striking warning of the need of sincerity in religious worship; the warning that our profession must not be greater than our love; that we must strive to *be* holy, not merely to *seem* to be; that we must have in view, as the end of our actions, the praise of God, not the praise of men.

Ananias professed more than he performed; for he professed to give the whole of his property, when he had bestowed only a part upon the Church; and, indeed, there was no obligation upon him to have given any of it. He strove to seem to be one of those who surrendered all for

Ananias and Sapphira. 50

Christ, while he was most anxious not really to make any such sacrifice. The end he had in view was the praise of men, not the praise of God. And so he was struck dead, with his wife, as a warning to the Church, for all time, of the heinousness of this very sacrilege, of trifling with holy things, of lying to God.

III. If we study the two stories of the judgments upon Uzzah and upon Ananias and Sapphira, we shall see that there are two sides to the worship of God—the external side and the interior side. The latter is, of course, by far the most important; but the former is not to be neglected. Man is composed of body and spirit, and perfect worship must be the worship of the body and of the spirit. The worship of body alone degenerates into mere formalism; that of spirit alone too often ends either in hypocrisy or unbelief. Christianity is an expression of both. We must first worship God in spirit and in truth, in our hearts; and then we shall express that worship through the services appointed in the Church, especially in the Church's great act of worship, the Holy Eucharist. There never has been a time when the Church has not enjoined upon her children exterior worship; and since its institution there never has been a time when the Holy Eucharist has not been the centre of Christian life.

“God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.” First, there must be absolute sincerity in our religion. We must not say more than we feel; we must not do externally more than we really mean in our hearts. But, on the other hand, it is not enough to stop short at the worship of the heart; we should strive, by diligent use of the sacraments and means of grace, by reverently assisting in the services of the Church, to express before men the devotion of our hearts and lives to God.

Sermon LIX.

LOVE THE FULFILMENT OF LAW.

(The Fifth Sunday after Easter.)

DEUTERONOMY VI. 4, 5.

"Hear, O Israel : The Lord our GOD is one Lord : And thou shalt love the Lord thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."



LAST Sunday we took for our subject " Law " as brought before us in the Book of Deuteronomy, and we observed that in so far as a law was just and perfect it was the expression of certain principles of truth or righteousness which could be traced back to GOD, the Creator of all things.

In the lesson to-day we have a summary of the Law, with which, in a slightly amplified form, we are especially familiar as thrice referred to in the Gospels by our Lord Himself; and on examination we find that it is really a unification of these principles under one general principle or law, namely, love.

The reason of this is not difficult to see; for law in its perfect form as revealed by GOD is the expression of the mind of Him Who is Love; and since man is not only GOD's creature, but created in GOD's image, it would naturally follow that man must reflect GOD's essential attribute of Love, and that in doing this he would fulfil the true law of his whole being.

Hence S. Paul asserts that " love is the fulfilment of law."¹ He does not say that love is the act of fulfilling

¹ Rom. xiii. 10.

Love the Fulfilment of Law. §6

(πλήρωσις) law, but the substance of its fulfilment (πλήρωμα), that in which its fulfilment consists.

1. Some may see a difficulty in this, and may ask, Does not GOD command an impossibility? For love is not within our own control; we cannot love a person to order. Love must be spontaneous.

Now, GOD certainly could not command what was impossible for us to obey. And if we investigate human nature, even as we find it in the world now, we shall discover reasons for acknowledging that GOD's command that we should love Him supremely, with all our heart and soul and mind, so far from being impossible, because unnatural, is based, as all GOD's commands are, upon the very law of our natural constitution.

1. We do not consider it unreasonable to expect a mother to love her child. On the contrary, the mother who does not love her child is called an unnatural mother, that is, a mother who violates the very law of nature which demands that she should love her children.

2. We do not think it strange that a man should love his country; for patriotism is one of the deepest instincts of our race. It is not easy, perhaps it is not possible, to explain why a man should love his country; but that as a rule he does love it, even where that country is insignificant, is so universally the case, or, as we should say, so natural, that we brand the man who actively violates this instinct by the name of "traitor."

3. Again, with some exceptions, we find the same rule true in regard to the love of husband and wife. I say "with some exceptions," because, through the power of sin, this is more often violated than the maternal or patriotic instinct. Nevertheless, to speak of a woman as "an unloving wife" implies that she is an exception to the rule.

4. All men would probably agree that the instinct of love in these three relationships is part of man's natural constitution, that it was implanted in man at his creation. But in admitting this we have to give up the objection that love must be entirely spontaneous, and cannot be controlled in any particular channel or relationship.

There is, however, a relationship closer than any of these three, more universal, and more intimately bound up with the original constitution of man—the relation of the soul to God. The instinct of motherhood and the marital relation are confined to certain classes—mothers and the married. And even the love of one's mother-land may hardly exist in that large class of persons who emigrated in early life from their native home.

But the instinct of religion, the relation of the soul to God, is absolutely universal. It is limited neither by sex nor class. Every man was created, and therefore stands in a certain relation to his Creator, a relation which makes the love of God a most natural instinct. Here, again, sin comes in, perverting the relationship and destroying the love; but the religious instinct which is universal in man nevertheless witnesses to the relationship, even though in many individuals it may have been perverted by sin.

The famous utterance of S. Augustine in his "Confessions," "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our heart is restless, until it rests in Thee,"¹ is not merely the expression of a devout Christian, but of a great soul recognizing that insatiable craving for God which is an instinct of the human race.

God, then, in commanding us to love Him with our whole nature, so far from enjoining that which is unnatural or impossible, only requires us to fulfil the natural law of

¹S. Aug. "Confess.", Migne, P.L. xxxii., col. 66r.

Love the Fulfilment of Law. 36

our being, to recognize the natural relationship of the creature to its Creator, of the child to its Heavenly Father, of the citizen of heaven towards his true mother-land.

II. But how are we to love God? The text tells us, with every part of our nature, with our whole being—heart, and soul, and strength. We may observe in the Gospels that our Lord in quoting this command varies it slightly. In S. Matthew it reads, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy *mind*”;¹ in S. Mark, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength”;² in S. Luke, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind.”³ Thus we see that in the record of our Lord’s words in S. Matthew “mind” is substituted for “strength,” while in S. Mark and S. Luke it is added in addition to “strength.”

We are, then, to love God with all our force or strength, and especially with the three parts of our nature represented by the heart, the soul and the mind. Now what do these parts signify? Among the Jews, and, indeed, both in its Old and New Testament use, “heart” stands for the centre of the energies or activities of a man’s life; in other words, for his will.

The soul represents the desires, affections and emotions of the psychic life, which we sometimes speak of as pertaining to the animal soul, as distinct from those powers which belong to the rational soul.

While the mind denotes the powers of the higher or rational soul or spirit of man, all those wonderful faculties which are associated with man’s intellectual life.

¹S. Matt. xxii. 37.

²S. Mark xii. 30.

³S. Luke x. 27. 1815

☞ Love the Fulfilment of Law.

We are, then, to love GOD with all these parts of our nature. Every man has these three parts. But we find them developed in different degrees in different individuals; so that some will manifest their love of GOD more through one part or power than others. And this throws light upon a very common difficulty experienced by really good people.

There are many who desire with all their heart to love GOD, and yet complain that they are not able to love Him; by which they mean they are not able to feel emotional love of GOD; they are not able to retain the sensible devotion for GOD which, perhaps, they once experienced. They are not able at will to call up strong feelings of love for GOD; and so they are disheartened and discouraged, where perhaps there is no sufficient cause for discouragement; since we are not all constituted alike in temperament, and *sensible* devotion does not always belong to the highest part of man's soul. It is, indeed, dependent upon his psychic life far more than upon his intellect or will.

The highest love of GOD is manifested in duty, and may sometimes be found in the man who, not possessed of an emotional temperament, has a very high sense of duty; that is, he does what he ought to do, often at the cost of very great personal sacrifice. Such a man frequently exhibits far more real love of GOD in doing his duty than the man who experiences religious ecstasies, but leaves many of his duties undone. Our Blessed Lord said to His Apostles, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments."¹ That is, Christ set forth *obedience*, not *feeling*, as the proof of love.

Then, too, in others the love of the mind is especially developed. They bend all their powers of mind upon the study of GOD, of His Character, of His revelation. These

¹ S. John xiv. 15.

Love the Fulfilment of Law. 56

are men who will not profess a belief in one iota more than they really accept with their intellect; but they go on from step to step in their study of GOD and of His revelation.

They may be likened to the two disciples journeying on Easter Day from Jerusalem to Emmaus, who were talking over the events of Good Friday and the reports of our Lord's resurrection on Easter Day; to these our Lord joined Himself, and, without being recognized by them, accompanied them in their journey, questioning them and drawing out from them an expression of their difficulties and doubts, and answering them by throwing light upon the Old Testament Scriptures which bore witness to Him. And at last, as their journey drew to an end, He made "as though He would have gone further," but they constrained Him to abide with them, and in the breaking of bread He was recognized by them. "Their eyes were opened, and they knew Him. . . . And they said one to another, Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the Scriptures?"¹

It is so with some men of intellectual gifts, who devote their lives to the study of the truth, they are led on from step to step by Christ Himself. At first, perhaps, they only understand imperfectly His revelation; but if they are real seekers after truth, and persevere in their search, they are led on at last into the full light of the knowledge of GOD in Christ. These men, with all their intellectual difficulties, truly *love* GOD, and acceptably manifest that love through the exercise of their intellectual powers.

It has been said that "Love is a principle and a passion." All can act upon the principle, though all may not experience the passion; but the principle is greater than the passion.

¹ Cf. S. Luke xxiv. 13-33.

S. Paul says, "Love is the fulfilment of law"; for in the exercise of love according to our natural gifts we fulfil that law of our being which was impressed upon our nature by our Creator, Who Himself is Love; and Who, in commanding us to love Him with all our heart, and all our soul, and all our mind, enjoins no impossible task, but one in the fulfilment of which man finds his happiness; for the soul of man is restless, until it finds God and rests in Him.

Sermon LX.

S. STEPHEN.

(The Fifth Sunday after Easter.)

ACTS VI. 9, 10.

"Then there arose certain of the synagogue, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them of Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen. And they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake."



It has been the good fortune of some few men to win a place in the annals of the world by one great achievement—either by contributing to the world's ideas one magnificent conception, or to the world's great deeds one heroic act—which has changed the course of human events and so left its mark on the pages of history.

S. Stephen was one of these few, and he won his place on both grounds:—

For his was the first mind to grasp the full import of Christ's last command, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to *every* creature,"¹ the first to recog-

¹S. Mark xvi. 15.

nize the capacity for salvation in *all* men, the power of the Gospel to save all men—in a word, the catholicity of Christianity.

Then, besides this, in one splendid speech, uttered in the face of bitterest opposition, he proclaimed this truth, and sealed his testimony with his blood. He contributed not only an idea but an example—the example of martyrdom.

The Church has ever honoured S. Stephen as her proto-martyr, the first of that noble army, who, having sealed their testimony with their blood, now stand before the Throne of God and praise Him continually. But it is only in recent times that S. Stephen's place among the Church's theologians has been adequately recognized, and that the idea, which in S. Paul's mind grew to such colossal proportions—the catholic conception of the Church of Christ—has been traced to its human source in the mind of S. Stephen.

I. S. Stephen's history as recorded in the *Acts of the Apostles* is brief indeed. To many, perhaps, it has seemed but an introduction to a greater history, that of the young man at whose feet the witnesses laid down their clothes when they stoned Stephen. But to the student of Christianity to-day it is of fascinating interest as revealing the source, after Christ, of the conception of truth, which has not merely coloured but has inspired the teaching of the Church of God.

S. Stephen was no ordinary man. His natural gifts caused him to be chosen as the first of the deacons; and in half a dozen verses in this chapter of *the Acts* we are twice told that he was a man "full of faith"; once, that he was "full of the Holy Ghost"; "full of power"; and that his words were irresistible, because of the "wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." And in his magnificent speech before the Sanhedrim we have an example of

that clearness, force and eloquence which overwhelmed opposition, even where it did not convert the opposers.

S. Stephen was probably a Hellenist; that is, he was one of those Jews of the Dispersion, either born or brought up in a Jewish colony abroad, who went to the Holy Land only occasionally to visit Jerusalem and take part in the national feasts. As a Hellenist he was more free from prejudice than the native born Hebrews, and therefore his mind was more open to conviction, more able to grasp the full significance of the revelation of Jesus Christ.

We see, then, before us one in the prime of early manhood, endowed with great natural gifts both of body and of mind; of body, for the face of Stephen, we are told, was as the face of an angel; and of mind, for Stephen was filled with wisdom.

Again, this great intellect had been turned upon the worthiest, the noblest subject, the human mind has ever studied—the revelation of Jesus Christ—a subject which has engrossed the greatest intellects of every age since Stephen's day, and which has been found inexhaustible, as witnessed by the theological literature which is still poured forth from our presses in an ever increasing stream.

In addition to intellectual gifts, S. Stephen was "full of the Holy Ghost." The Spirit of God, Who alone knows the deep things of God, Who alone can guide man into all truth, dwelt in S. Stephen and illuminated his mind to such a degree that the inspired Word of God describes him as "full of the Holy Ghost." The result of this in S. Stephen was a conviction in regard to truth which ran absolutely counter to the popular faith of his day, in so far as that faith confined the religious privileges and the favour of God practically to the Jewish nation. This conviction far outran even the faith of his own teachers, at

least with respect to the consequences which flowed from our Lord's commission to preach the Gospel to *every* creature.

His opponents were apparently Hellenist Jews like himself; but while the prejudices of their race prevented them from accepting his teaching, yet they found themselves unable to refute his arguments. They therefore determined to stop his teaching by cutting off his life. They "suborned men, which said, We have heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses, and against God. . . . And set up false witnesses, which said, This man ceaseth not to speak blasphemous words against this holy place, and the law."

The charge, like that brought against Christ, seemed to the Jews to contain an element of truth; for, though S. Stephen's teaching was the real fulfilment of the Mosaic Law, it involved, as S. Stephen's speech shows, the extension to the whole world of privileges hitherto claimed by the Jews alone, and by them confined to the Holy Land, to Jerusalem, and to the Temple. So they suborned men who witnessed that Stephen had spoken blasphemously against Moses, and the Law, and the Holy Place to which the Jews would limit the presence and favour of God.

II. S. Stephen was brought before the Sanhedrim. This was the critical moment of his life; the moment when he launched his great idea upon the stormy seas of the world's opposition; the moment when he left to the world the splendid example of a life laid down in witness to a religious conviction. It was a moment of tremendous trial—may we not say of great temptation, the temptation to be over-awed by the august assembly before which he stood, and to compromise the truth which he held and had taught? For he might have argued with himself that, as he alone at that time possessed this truth, if he threw away

his life, the truth would die with him—as though truth could ever die!

S. Paul was not yet a Christian, and S. Peter had not yet learned by the vision of Joppa to set aside his Jewish prejudices against the equal rights of the Gentiles. It was S. Stephen's conception of truth, and to whom would he commit it if he died?

And then again, his death, the death of martyrdom for Christ. It was an unknown experience then. S. Stephen could not look back upon a great army of martyrs who had laid down their lives for Christ, and had found in the hour of their trial the grace of Christ sufficient for them. S. Stephen was called to do what no man had done before. He could look back upon no heroic predecessors; he must make the first experiment of the power of the grace of Christ to enable a man to face death rather than compromise truth.

But, by the help of the Holy Ghost, S. Stephen realized that his opportunity had come. He did not let it pass; he seized it, though he knew it would cost him his life. He raised on high the blazing torch of truth, and fell with it, dead—but one of his persecutors, S. Paul, converted by the grace of God, caught up that torch and carried it through the world!

One great lesson we may lay to heart in passing—the lesson that we need never fear for the life of truth; for truth is immortal. When once a truth has been born into this world, the whole world may rise up and attempt to kill it; but truth cannot be killed. Great is the truth, and it always prevails; persecution only spreads it; the blood of martyrs only fertilizes the soil in which it is sown. Let us be afraid to compromise truth, afraid to water it down to the prejudices of its enemies or the cowardice of

S. Stephen. 50

its friends. But let us not fear lest truth should die when we die; and let us count it all honour patiently to suffer for the truth's sake.

Just before his martyrdom S. Stephen was rewarded by a vision of his Ascended Lord; for "he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of GOD, and Jesus standing on the right hand of GOD." In the power of this vision he gladly met his cruel death. His enemies rushed upon him, cast him out of the city, and stoned him with stones, as he uttered his last prayer, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit . . . Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

S. Stephen fell asleep, "And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him"; but the seed he sowed and watered with his blood has sprung up and borne fruit throughout the world in the missionary work of the Church of GOD; for the very faith which still inspires that work is the truth which S. Stephen died to teach, *that GOD wills all men to be saved*; ¹ that Christ has commanded the Gospel to be preached to every creature.

We are on the threshold of the Feast of our Lord's Ascension, when, like S. Stephen, we are called to look up stedfastly into heaven and to behold the glory of our Ascended Lord as He reigns at the right hand of God the Father; and, like S. Stephen, in the power of that vision we are called to toil, to suffer, and to win our crown.

¹ Cf. 1 Tim. ii. 4.

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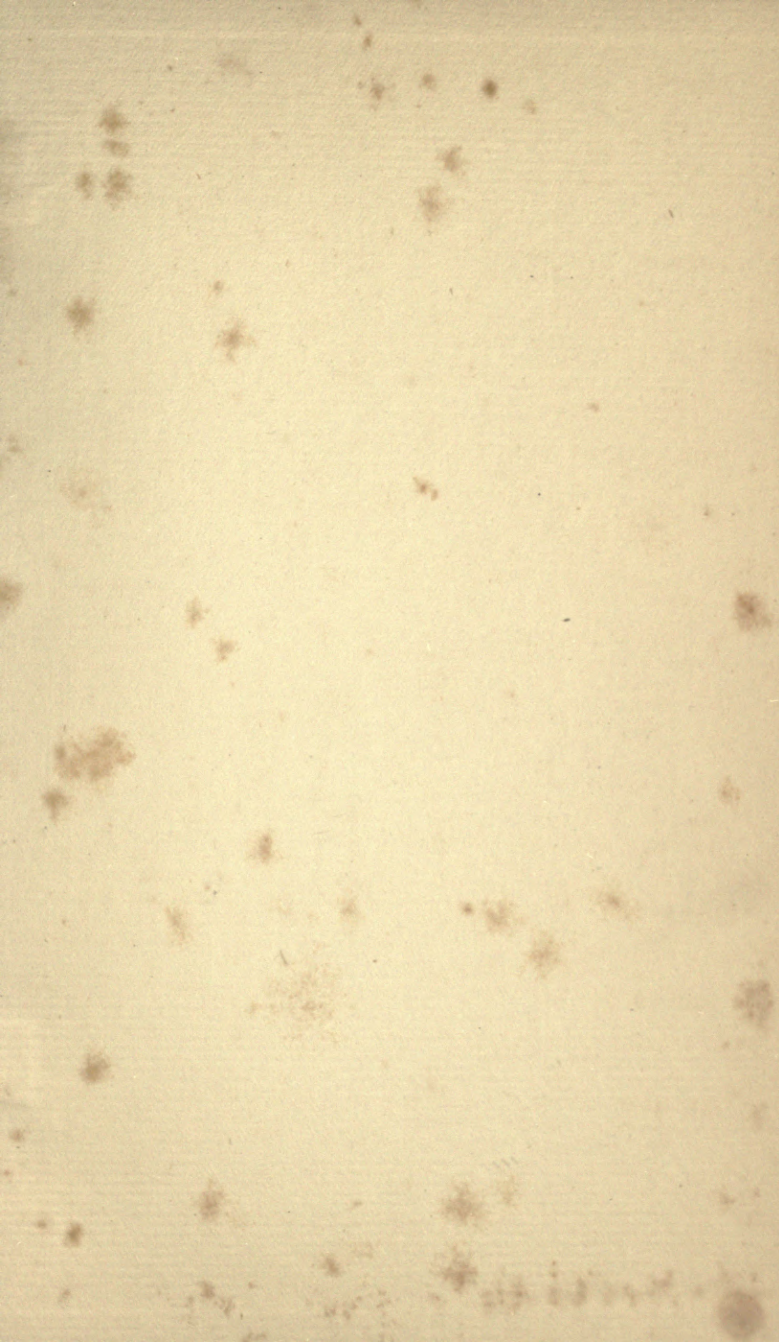
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